

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

January / February 2014 • cjr.org

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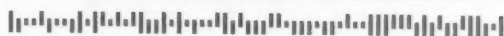
Malala Yousafzai's waltz with
the media

Can Matt Damon make climate
change sexy?

Boxing writers look in the
mirror, and wince

Evgeny vs. the Internet

Evgeny Morozov is either the smartest, most-feared,
most-hated, or most-useless writer on digital
technology working today. But what does he want?



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COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

January/February 2014

"To assess the performance of journalism ... to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession, and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent."

—from the founding editorial, 1961



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THE AUDIT Dean Starkman (Kingsford Capital Fellow),
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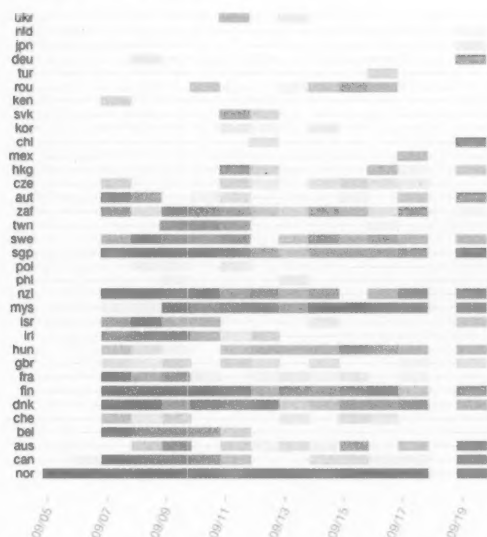
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Opening Shot

Where was this trending?

When was this trending?



When YouTube began releasing the top trending videos in 61 countries and many US cities, Ethan Zuckerman decided to probe the data with a simple question: What videos do two countries have in common? The result is "What We Watch," a project by the MIT Media Lab and Center for Civic Media, which Zuckerman runs, that shows how videos spread online by monitoring their popularity, country by country. The trajectory also illuminates relationships between nations. For example: A Punjabi pop song becomes simultaneously popular in India, the United States, and Germany, in accordance with labor migration. Or last summer's smash hit "What Does the Fox Say?" by the Norwegian comedy duo Ylvis, which trended first in their homeland but only spread once the video hit Canada. One promise of the digital sphere is access to increasingly diverse media. But cyberspace doesn't often live up to its vow of borderlessness. "We've gotten an internet that seems to be very good at reinforcing local dialogues and local presences," says Zuckerman. Perhaps sitting with another nation's time-wasters might help bridge the gap. **CJR**

Taste test "What Does The Fox Say?" swept through Europe, Canada, South Africa, and the Pacific Rim, but South America wasn't interested.



The right debate

Access vs. accountability is what matters

Back in October, Bill Keller of *The New York Times* and Glenn Greenwald, formerly of *The Guardian* and now leading a new journalism venture backed by billionaire Pierre Omidyar, engaged in a celebrated and interesting 5,400-word back-and-forth on the *Times* website about an ancient journalism question: the relative virtues of reportorial “objectivity” (or impartiality, as Keller prefers) versus activist reporters who wear their beliefs on their sleeves.

The first term must always be surrounded by quote marks because no one seems to fully believe in it. Still, Keller describes his “impartial” journalism as being potentially as potent as any other form but one that expects reporters “to keep their opinions to themselves.” He sets his kind of journalism apart from “crusading journalists,” including the muckrakers who set the crusading standard a century ago. Greenwald counters with the often-expressed argument that objectivity is an impossible goal, and adds that this “suffocating constraint on how reporters are permitted to express themselves produces a self-neutering form of journalism that becomes as ineffectual as it is boring.”

A for-instance revolved around the word “torture”—why Greenwald would use it, and why Keller thinks it unnecessary if relevant facts are provided instead.

The trouble with this argument isn’t only that there’s no resolving it, or that it’s fuzzy and imprecise. The problem is

that it’s the wrong argument. A more clarifying polarity than objectivity versus activism, or impartiality versus partisanship, is one that *CJR*’s Dean Starkman lays out starting on page 39: access versus accountability.

This, he argues, is the perennial tension that defines the field, its “Jacob and Esau, Gog and Magog.” These are two different views of journalism’s very purpose, forever in competition for status, resources, and power. These approaches require different skills, different practices, and different sources, and produce radically different representations of reality. Access journalism seeks to provide insider information from powerful institutions and people. Accountability journalism seeks to provide information about those people and institutions. Put in even shorter-hand, access reporting tells you what the powerful said, while accountability reporting tells you what they did.

Nowhere was the difference more consequential than in the coverage of Wall Street and the mortgage business in the run-up to the Great Recession, the subject of Starkman’s new book (from which the article is excerpted): *The Watchdog That Didn’t Bark: The Financial Crisis and the Disappearance of Investigative Journalism*. It was accountability reporting—done, as it happens, almost entirely outside the mainstream business press—that understood and conveyed the systemic corruption that was overrunning the subprime mortgage business. Access reporting not only missed the story, but, Starkman argues, it fueled the frenzy.

This debate is not about the use of hot words, like “torture.” It’s about whether journalism perceives as its core mission holding power to account. If it doesn’t, then the DealBooks and Playbooks of the world will always win the day. If it does, then the access-accountability polarity should be the defining measure of journalism’s merits.

To be clear, access journalism is not an inherently bad thing, and is in fact a vital, useful, and inevitable journalistic form. Given the competitive pressures and the way the world works, there will always be a journalism focused on getting close to elites to learn what they are thinking and intending. And that’s okay. It’s the other stuff—public interest-oriented, accountability journalism—that is at once journalism’s most powerful and paradoxically its most vulnerable form; the riskiest, the costliest, the most technically difficult. It’s the journalism we need to worry about. Other debates are a parlor game by comparison. **CJR**



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Alain de Botton

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Culture shock

Smart column ("Off the road," *CJR*, November/December). As the boss of Lyft told me the other week, it's not a car culture anymore, it's a "phone culture." The implications of that—and of better, more walkable city neighborhoods, expanded light rail, bike paths that link up so you can actually get somewhere on them, hybrid-electric drive automobiles, Zipcar, Uber, Sidecar, Lyft and the other emerging semi-outlaw livery services could make for a really juicy beat just by themselves.

Cars used to define their drivers, socio-economically and emotionally. That they were expensive semi-durable goods meant a lot for middle-class American incomes. The same just can't be said for the Galaxy S or iPhone, made in China by people who cannot dream of owning one.

Therein lies the rub, of course: You follow the money on the "mobility" beat and pretty soon you're writing like a "labor reporter," and we can't have that!

Edward Ericson Jr.

Comment on *CJR.org*

Downward mobility

Culturally, the car used to stand for freedom and independence—and style ("The love affair is over," *CJR*, November/December). And the cars were designed with those traits in mind. If you look at old cars—the MGA of 1959, say, the Chrysler New Yorker of 1962, the Ford Bronco through the early 1970s—these vehicles (and many others) were built and marketed around character. As in: They had it and wanted to attract a certain type.

Through the early '70s, too, an average kid with a kid job could afford to buy one, new. Putting the product within reach of the target market played a role.

Today, everything looks like a caplet—you want the red pill or the blue?—and costs, as you say, \$30,000 or \$40,000,



'You follow the money on the 'mobility' beat and pretty soon you're writing like a "labor reporter," and we can't have that!'

which is two years' wages for any 20-year-old lucky enough to be slinging groceries or burgers.

So, two problems, only one of which—styling—can be easily solved by car manufacturers.

The shift is real, but I think it's more economically than purely socially based. In that it's a symptom of the country's larger problem, which is mostly about economics and equity.

Edward Ericson Jr.

Comment on *CJR.org*

The increase in gasoline prices, coupled with the permanent recession that we're now enduring, can explain the supposed decline in driving that so excites Micheline, who, as editor of *Curbing Cars*, is probably less than dispassionate when it comes to these matters. *Car and Driver* sells 1.2 million dead-tree issues a month. What is *Curbing Cars*' circulation?

Alan Vanneman

Comment on *CJR.org*

Telling secrets

Are we talking about the same Daniel Patrick Moynihan ("America's secret fetish," *CJR*, November/December) who wrote this?

The release of secret Soviet documents after the collapse of the Soviet Union has also provided conclusive evidence of the American [Communist] party's disloyalty, thus demolishing the theory that domestic anti-Communism was simply a conspiracy against the Left.

Tell me, Mr. Shafer, according to this, are you one of the revisionists who seek to minimize or dismiss the real threat posed by the Soviet Union during the cold war? While Moynihan thought excessive secrecy was counterproductive to real national security needs, he firmly believed the Soviet Union and its paid and loyal lackeys in the West posed an existential threat to the United States.

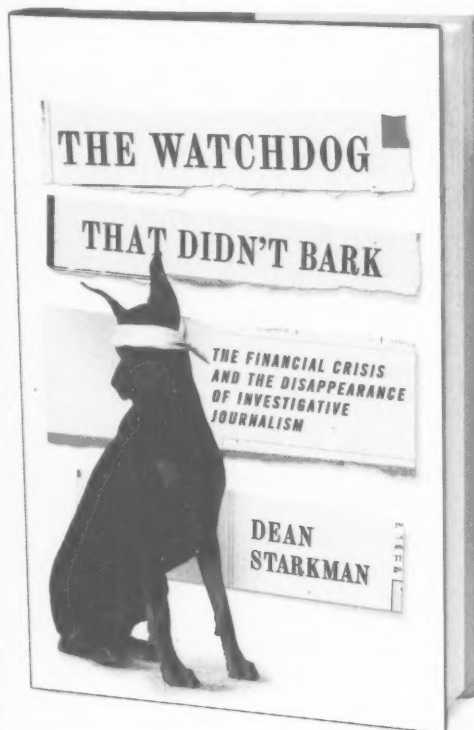
I firmly believe that decades from

EDITORS' NOTE

CJR begins a new era this month, as Liz Spayd joins the *Review* as editor in chief and publisher. Spayd, who spent 25 years at *The Washington Post*, most recently as its managing editor, becomes the tenth top editor in *CJR*'s 53-year history, and the first to serve as both editor and publisher. We welcome her, and look forward to working together to refine *CJR*'s mission—in the print magazine and at *CJR.org*—as a vital voice in the ongoing debate about the future of journalism. Brent Cunningham, *CJR*'s deputy editor who has served as its interim editor in chief since June 2013, begins a four-month leave to finish a book.

—the editors

COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW BOOKS



The Watchdog That Didn't Bark

The Financial Crisis and the Disappearance of Investigative Journalism

Dean Starkman

"The author we have been waiting for to tell this story."

—Todd Gitlin, author of *Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives*

"Intelligent, engaging, and erudite."

—Eric Alterman, Brooklyn College, and media columnist, *The Nation*

"Read Starkman's powerful and disturbing analysis of how business journalism came to write for an audience of investors, not citizens."

—Michael Schudson, author of *The Power of News*



Beyond News

The Future of Journalism

Mitchell Stephens

"*Beyond News* does an excellent job of reaching back into the past to find models for future journalism."

—Evan Cornog, Dean of the School of Communication at Hofstra University

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now when access to troves of classified material is made available to all we will see a similar thread between the GWOT and the cold war: There was a serious threat against the United States. This threat was at times used for political purposes by individuals and organizations who overstated it or dismissed it, and a not insignificant portion of individuals who dismissed it held loyalties with the forces and organizations who threatened the United States.

Mike H

Comment on CJR.org

In Bob we trust

Thank you for the moving piece "In the name of the Father" (Re: Robert Hoyt) by Mike Hoyt (CJR, September/October).

Bob Hoyt was, without a doubt, the dean of religious journalists in the latter half of the 20th century and beyond. His accomplishments were manifold. He created the outstanding *National Catholic Reporter*, which unhesitatingly, courageously, and continuously took on the issues of church and state from its founding by him in 1964.

I first met Bob in the early days of the "Protestant-Roman Catholic dialogue" when I was managing editor of *Christianity & Crisis* (C&C), a liberal Protestant journal founded by Reinhold Niebuhr. He and I were asked by CBS to do a Sunday morning show interviewing Bishop Charles Helmsing of Kansas City in 1963, shortly after the First Session of Vatican Two. Helmsing had evidently been tapped as a liberal at the session. Bob told me he could never understand why.

A few years later we were invited to join a group of Protestant and Roman Catholic editors on a trip to the Middle East conceived by the American Jewish Committee and the United Church of Christ. We spent five days in Cairo, five in Jordan, and 10 in Israel. We traveled pretty freely throughout and generally got to see who and what we wanted to see. We interviewed King Hussein in Jordan, Prime Minister Golda Meir in her Tel Aviv office, where she told us there was no such thing as a Palestinian people, and Abba Iiban in his Jerusalem home. Each of us responded differently and were essentially supporters of the State of Israel. Some of us were disturbed by what we had seen

in Jordan and by the way Palestinians were treated, as we reported when we went to a debriefing at the State Department in Washington.

In the early seventies, NCR lost significant circulation, and its publisher blamed Hoyt and ousted him. Those of us in the field who had significantly fought for civil rights and opposed the Vietnam War knew better as we had suffered similarly. NCR's loss turned out to be C&C's gain as Bob moved to New York.

We prospered as he made a great contribution to us with his writing, thinking, and editing for more than a decade. Our outlook on the world and the issues before us were quite similar. We were of one mind on racism and sexism and openly supported the gay community. In the 1960s only 1 percent of

what we published was written by females. By the '80s, 20 percent was, and by the mid-'80s a third of our reviews were also. Few journals could match that record.

Bob eventually moved on to make a significant contribution as senior writer at the much respected *Commonweal*.

Mike Hoyt's essay was a brave piece of writing and remembrance of his father, who became the Walter Lippmann of the nation's religious press.

Wayne H. Cowan

South Hadley, MA

Correction

In "America's secret fetish" (CJR, November/December), we incorrectly stated the number of terms Daniel Patrick Moynihan served on the US Senate. The correct number is four. **CJR**

NOTES FROM OUR ONLINE READERS

IN EARLY DECEMBER, CJR'S RYAN CHITTUM WROTE A CRITIQUE ON A "STUDY" MAKING its way around the Web that reported on abuse suffered by female journalists, published by the International Women's Media Foundation and the International News Safety Institute. While a salient topic of discussion, Chittum wrote, the study was less than scientific, merely culling responses online from volunteers. Elisa Lees Munoz, executive director of IWMF, defended the work:

I wish that you had reached out to me for this article ("Credulous press for a report on abuse of female journalists," CJR.org, December 6, 2013). I am the executive director of the IWMF. I could have given you a much better understanding of what we are trying to do with the study. While we can't control headlines, we are well aware that we are not representing a scientific picture of the percentage of women journalists threatened, just the women journalists who responded to the survey. In addition, the survey does require information about where the individual works as well as contact information to enable us to go back to respondents.

The kind of information that we are gathering is critical to the work of the IWMF and that of many other journalism development organizations. We have been gathering stories of women journalists in extreme threat around the world for nearly 25 years. The study helps us to pinpoint the kinds of threats women are facing and thereby create programs to help address and mitigate them. Clearly a comprehensive survey is necessary. Funding for that kind of work is extremely hard to come by. This is a good first step to provide important information about the conditions under which many women journalists are working.

I feel you are condemning the study based on the articles written about it, not the intent of the survey, without having spoken to anyone directly responsible for the study; potentially falling into the same trap as the one you accuse the authors of the articles of falling into. —Elisa Lees Munoz

Chittum responds:

It's fair to criticize your report without talking to you about it. I contacted the INSI and the consultant behind the report, but neither got back to me. I wanted to know more about the methodology, but there was enough about it in your report to know that the survey was not rigorous.

I read the report as well as the press release and the press coverage above hardly distorted either of them. I criticized the report based on the report itself, and I criticized the coverage of it for failing to do the same.

I hope to see a better study of this critical issue sometime.

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Currents



Open Bar The Pen & Pencil Club

Philadelphia, PA

Year opened 1892

Distinguishing features Club members are especially proud of the Pen & Pencil's semi-secret location down a Center City back alley. For many years, the club's small lobby was home to an impressive collection of antique typewriters, some of which remain. Inside the club itself sits the notorious hotdog crockpot, ever-present and filled to the brim with free wieners that float in boiling brine.

Signature drink General manager Dan Kenney makes what is perhaps the finest Manhattan in all of Philadelphia. But for most P&P members, a bottle of beer does the trick, especially if it's a Yuengling.

Bold-faced names President William Howard Taft once pulled an all-nighter at the P&P. Broadway legend George M. Cohan was a regular, as were Red Smith and Damon Runyon.

On the record The P&P began as a merger of three reporters' clubs. At the time, there were 13 dailies serving Philadelphia—that's a lot of reporters. Since then, the P&P has occupied nearly a half-dozen different locations. The current bar, which appeared in an episode of Anthony Bourdain's series, *The*

Layover, was previously home to a ladies bridge club. (And yes, the rumors are true: After being soundly beaten at a game of rock-paper-scissors during his visit, Bourdain was forced to down a shot of hotdog water.)

Off the record Just about anything that happens at the P&P stays at the P&P. The club has a longstanding "off the record" tradition that's taken very seriously. "One of the nice things about the bar," says *Philadelphia Daily News* reporter and P&P President Chris Brennan, "is

Darts & Laurels

Twitter hysteria and a health-care horror story

A **DART** to *The Daily Mail* for accusing former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown of claiming more than £316,000 in salary and “personal expenses”—which, whoops, never happened—then burying its correction at the bottom of a page. The false claims mysteriously disappeared, without correction, from a second column, by *The Mail*’s Andrew Pierce. Another milestone in *The Mail*’s quest to uphold the Fourth Estate.



A **LAUREL** to Funny or Die for poking fun at *Time*’s childish Chris Christie cover—“The Elephant in the Room,” get it?—by revealing the nine other versions we’re lucky *Time* didn’t publish. Top of the list: “Going Whole Hog: Is Chris Christie hungry enough to devour the competition?”

A **DART** to *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen for his latest bout of insensitivity: implying that it is not racist, merely “conventional,” to mask a gag reflex at the thought of an interracial family like the de Blasios. Brought to you by the same man who claimed Trayvon Martin was wearing “a uniform we all recognized” as criminal—i.e. a hoodie.



A **LAUREL** to *The Guardian*’s Bronwen Clune for deflating a pompous editorial from *The Australian* that decried Twitter as a “path to ruin.” Yes folks, *The*

Australian believes Twitter is “an alternative media universe, one inhabited by activist reporters, gung-ho controversialists and narcissistic tweeters,” and it’s destroying journalism. (Makes one wonder why the editorial page has a Twitter share button.)

A **LAUREL** to Michael Hiltzik of the *Los Angeles Times* for debunking an oft-repeated Obamacare horror story. California resident Deborah Cavallaro told reporters she would be paying far more under Obamacare than she had paid before, and that she might have to do without health insurance. But after a little digging, Hiltzik discovered that better plans than the one Cavallaro has are available right now, some of them for less money.

French daily *Libération* also deserves a **LAUREL** for removing all images from its November 14 issue. Timed to coincide with the opening day of Paris Photo, the paper’s bare pages were a reminder, in a market of depleted photojournalism jobs, of the importance of good photography.

The Lower Case

Prison-bound Beavers seeking federal help

Chicago Tribune, 11/28/13

Romney’s son says he helped people in Utah crash

Associated Press, 11/30/13

Colorado Man Attacked by Three Coyotes Walking to Work

AOL’s “Morning Rush,” 10/18/13

Cat groups doing great work greatly needed by cats

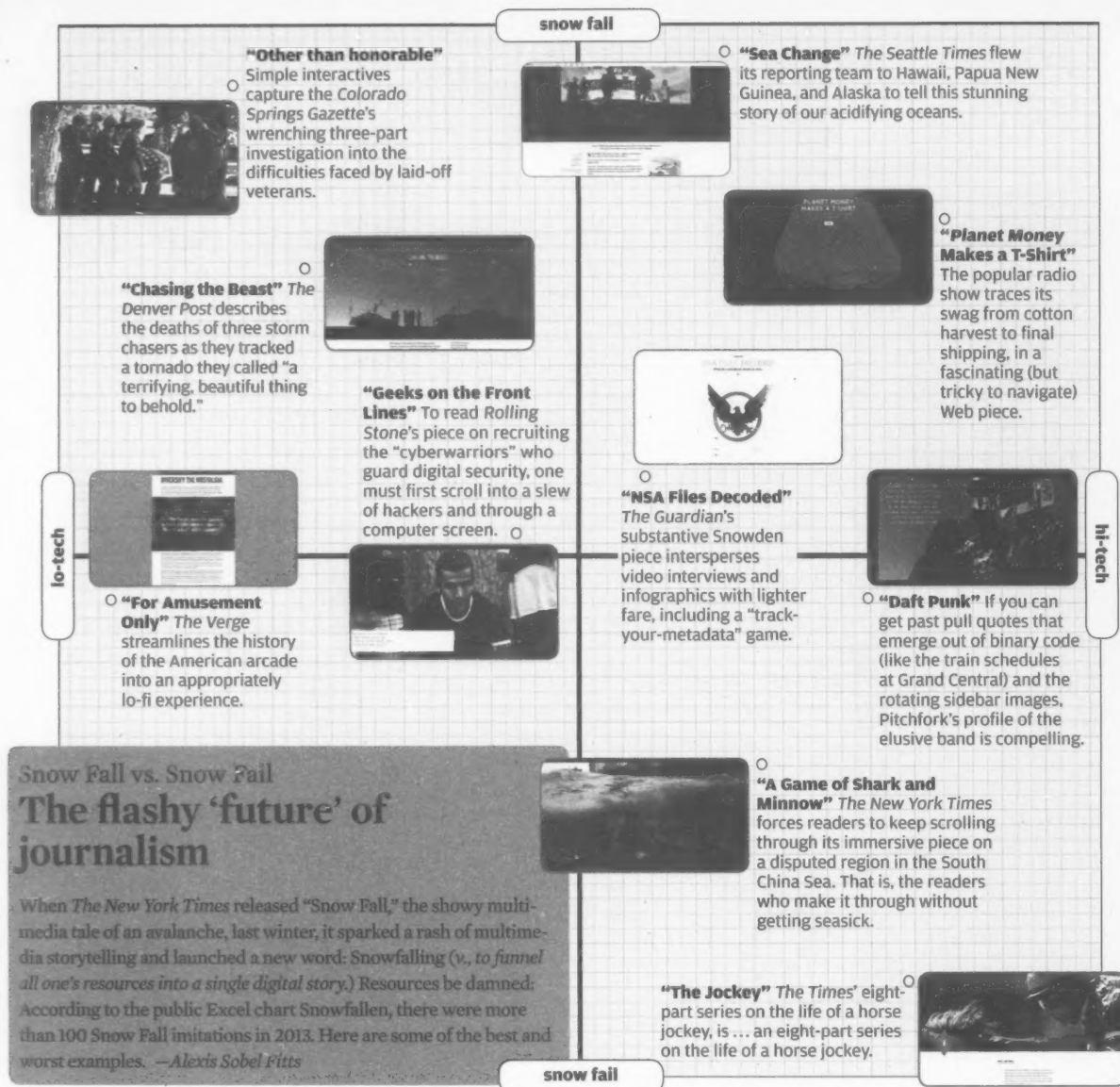
Contra Costa Times, 11/27/13

CJR offers a one-year subscription or gift subscription for an item published in *The Lower Case*. Please send original clippings to CJR, 729 Seventh Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10019, or links for Web items to christie.chisholm@gmail.com. Please include address, phone, and email.

that it’s a place where people can freely exchange ideas.” The club also hosts a weekly lecture series featuring local newsmakers. The talks are known as—you guessed it—Off-the-Record Sessions. Guest speakers (governors, police commissioners, and even the mayor) are free to share the down-and-dirty details of their jobs, secure in the knowledge that their secrets won’t show up in the next day’s morning edition.

—Dan Eldridge

Send recommendations for this feature to openbar@cjr.org.



Pimp Yo' Brand Journalists bang their own drums

For reporters, self-promotion isn't just prudent, it's essential. Although *In These Times* has multiple email newsletters, the non-profit magazine encouraged staff writers Sady Doyle and Sarah Jaffe to send out newsletters of their own. "Each of them already had their own pretty substantial following" on social media and email networks before moving to the magazine, said Miles Kamp-Lassin, *In These Times's* community editor. Getting them to send out personal newsletters was a great opportunity for the magazine to capitalize on their individual audiences, and for Doyle and Jaffe to add commentary to their articles and personalize the experience

for readers. "It's an effective way to reach an audience directly," he said, "and also provide some context to the story."

For journalists who want to go the do-it-yourself route, services like TinyLetter allow you to aggregate articles and send them to the people most interested in your work. (Just be sure to observe the proper etiquette.) Also, App.net's Broadcast (available on Apple and Android platforms), lets reporters send homemade push notifications.

Alerts that pop up on subscribers' screens whenever new content is added, push notifications were once the preserve of major outlets like *The New York Times*. But now any journalist can develop his or her own notification stream. Users create a Broadcast channel and send out notifications to subscribers in the form of text, GIFs, or photos. It's another way of making sure messages don't get lost in the stream of Likes and tweets.

—Edirin Oputu

Ef-tymology In a word

When "Not Fucking Rocket Science" ended up on the "Journalism Is ..." cover of *CJR* (September/October 2013), letters flew in from people who were aghast.

What is it about newspaper people and that word? One of the courses I delight in teaching is "Dirty Words," a title we settled on when it became apparent the word *fuck* was just too hot for the catalogue. But *fuck* is at the heart of it.

By many measures, this is one of our most frequently used words, which is a tribute to its power because it has little or no sexual meaning in most modern usage. Despite debates across the universe of lexicography, no one can say for certain where *fuck* came from. That has not stopped people from inventing an origin. A favorite is "fornication under consent of the king," which is wrong. *Fuck* is not an acronym.

One guess is it made its way from German. It was clearly controversial because it was not included in Samuel Johnson's 1798 dictionary. Noah Webster excluded it from his dictionaries in 1806, 1807, 1817, 1828, and 1841, according to Christopher M. Fairman, the Ohio State professor who wrote *Fuck: Word Taboo and Protecting Our First Amendment Liberties*, which is one of the texts for my course.

Fairman notes some scholars reach back to the 23rd Egyptian dynasty, when legal documents were "reinforced" with a three-level curse: "May you get fucked by a donkey. May your wife get fucked by a donkey. May your child fuck your wife."

While interesting, this is not conclusive.

Fairman notes the first printed use of *fuck* may have

been in a Missouri Supreme Court ruling in 1846 on a case involving a slander of carnal knowledge of a mare. "The unglamorous truth is that *fuck* trickled into the English language just like the rest of our vocabulary," Fairman writes.

So it is a word with hidden roots. No surprise, because it has generally lost its meaning, too. *Fuck* was all about sex a long time ago, when D. H. Lawrence used it in *Lady Chatterly's Lover*, causing a flap that lasted decades. Chatterly was published in 1928 in Florence and it didn't hit the market in England until 1960, when Penguin defeated an obscenity charge. It was published by Grove Press in 1959 in the United States, scooped up by the US Post Office, then released when courts ruled it was not obscene.

Fairman argues that the meaning may have slipped from the word, but the taboo has not. This helps explain why people reacted the way they did to *CJR*'s cover.

If you plug the word into Google's Ngram viewer, which measures usage of specific words in publishing over time, you will note right away that *fuck* creeps into the lexicon in the late 1950s, explodes about the time of the free-speech movement, and has rocketed in usage since.

Surprising, then, that it took so long to make *CJR*'s cover.

Although newspapers have been the frequent targets of critics who say they are too liberal, in this area, they are not. *Fuck* has popped up in *The Washington Post* and newsmagazines on occasion. But it is not common in the daily press, even though it is exceedingly common in daily life.

That's all about risks in an era of declining circulation and revenues, I would argue. And it didn't take fucking rocket science to figure that out.

—Charles M. Madigan

Hard Numbers

79

years (1933-2012) that *Newsweek* was continuously in print in the US

279

years that *Lloyd's List*, the world's oldest newspaper still operating, lasted in print before moving solely online in 2013

34

percent of millennials watch mostly online video or no broadcast television

13

percent of Americans got most of their news about national and international issues from the internet in 2001

41

percent of Americans got most of their news about national and international issues from the internet in 2010

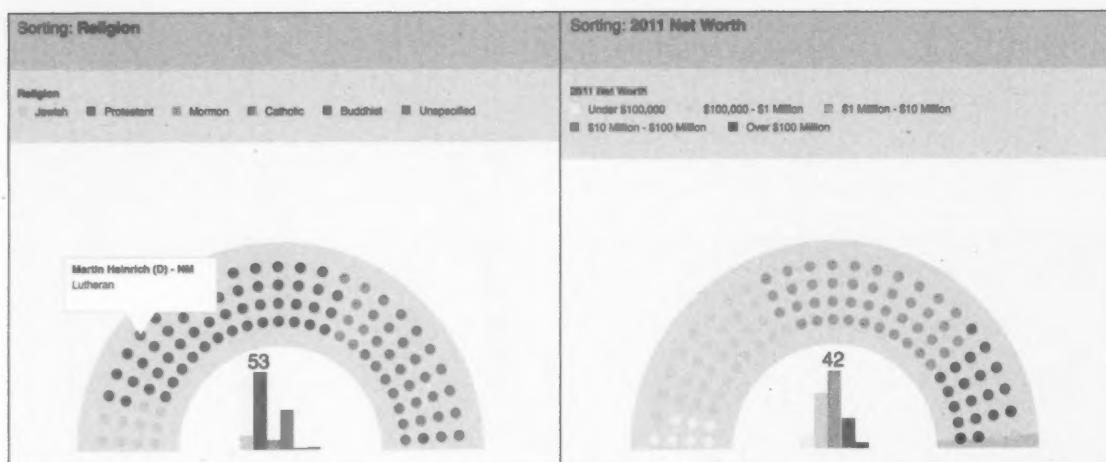
41

percent of Americans had read a newspaper in the past 24 hours in 2002

23

percent of Americans had read a newspaper in the past 24 hours in 2012

Sources: *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, Poynter, Pew Research Center, Pew Internet



Search Committee Getting to know 100 senators

The Sunlight Foundation's 100 Senators tool has a simple mission: to allow you to discover not just what senators do (or don't do, as the case may be) but who they are.

You can determine how many members are millionaires (61 percent), for example, or how many claim to be atheists (zero), or the correlation between senators' prior careers and their religion (five out of seven Mormon senators were lawyers, compared to three out of 10 Jewish senators). "We tend to think of the Senate or Congress as this sort of 'it.' Something we miss is the

fact that Congress is really a 'they,' says Lee Drutman, a senior fellow at the foundation. "There are people of different backgrounds, men and women, people with previous lives, and that affects how they view the world and how they legislate."

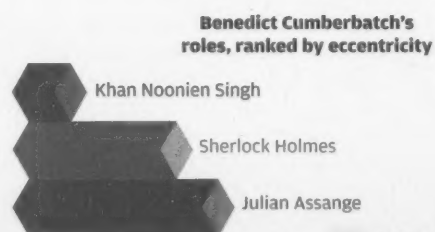
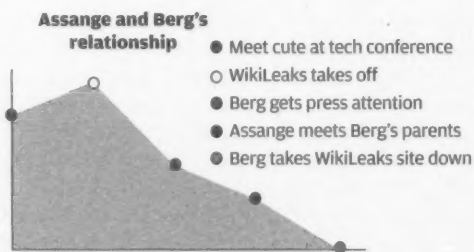
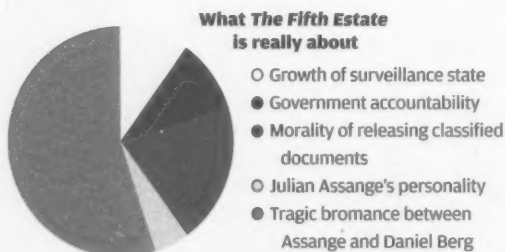
Two buttons control how you sift through information. The first, "Group By," breaks

members down by criteria such as region, profession, or age. The second, "Color By," fills in the subset with another variable. Let's say you want to group senators by region; you can color those breakdowns by net worth, gender, or highest degree earned. Or, if you're feeling adventurous, click "Random."

—Christie Chisholm

Click-to-play Find the 100 Senators tool on cjr.org.

Charted Territory The Fifth Estate



—Edirin Oputu

Not-So-Fluffy News

The pet beat takes chops

Most reporters expect to bring their résumé or clips to a job interview. Tanya Irwin was asked to bring her dog.

The Blade, in Toledo, OH, was looking for an animal-welfare reporter, and publisher John Robinson Block was eager to meet both Irwin and her Chihuahua, Martha. Laid-back Martha got on well with Block's friendly basset hound Clementine, and Irwin got the job.

America loves animals: The Humane Society of the United States puts the pet population at approximately 83.3 million owned dogs and 95.6 million owned cats. So it's not surprising that pet reporters abound, covering anything from leash laws and local shelters to funny cat videos.

As *The Blade's* "dog reporter," Irwin wrote about rescued kittens and bears, but it wasn't all fluff: She also confronted death on a daily basis. "I had to go to the dog warden and get a list of all of the dogs they had euthanized the previous day," she says. *The Blade* used the information in its "dog log," listing the deceased pets by breed, color, gender, and where they had been found. Block often asked for follow-ups on the entries—he was worried dogs might be put down unnecessarily. Even after he learned that most of the pets were euthanized because they were too dangerous to be suitable for adoption, the paper kept running the list. "These dogs who died, they deserved to be memorialized, and this was almost like their obituary in the paper every day," Irwin says.

Other investigative pieces fared better. Workers at the pound had a habit of labeling many of the dogs "pit bull" mixes, prompting Irwin to write a story on breed identification. "There was a stigma around pit bulls," Irwin says, and people were unwilling to adopt them because they thought the breed was too aggressive. Irwin arranged DNA tests for six dogs the pound had labeled pit bull mixes, and only one turned out to be a pit bull. The breed was removed from Ohio's "vicious" dogs list last year, and Irwin believes her story and *The Blade's*



advocacy helped change the public's perception of pit bulls.

Among Irwin's cuddlier jobs? Fostering Nellie, one of the first pregnant pit bulls to come out of the Lucas County pound. "She had her babies in my house. We set up a puppy cam, which we actually broadcast on the newspaper's website, and I

wrote about it," Irwin says. Nellie's nine puppies were born on St. Patrick's Day 2012 and were all given Irish names. "That was quite the experience. I had never seen a dog give birth before and I was a nervous wreck. You would think I was having babies instead of the dog."

—Edirin Oputu

Language Corner

Naming rights

The *New York Times* recently added an entry to its eponymous stylebook, available only online:

"In precise, traditional usage, an *eponym* is someone who gives a name to something else, and *eponymous* describes the giver of the name, not the receiver. A restaurateur named Terry Lamb could be described as the *eponymous* owner of *Terry Lamb's Restaurant*, but the establishment is not *Mr. Lamb's eponymous restaurant*."

The receiver of the "eponym's" name is its "namesake," and the *Times* added an entry for that as well.

That means the *Times* is the "eponym" and is the "eponymous" creator of its *Manual of Style and Usage*; the stylebook itself is the *Times'* "namesake," and describing the stylebook as "eponymous" is against *Times* style.

But while dictionaries agree that "eponym," the noun, always refers to the person bestowing the name, of the major dictionaries, only *Webster's New World* (the dictionary used by the *Times* and

The Associated Press, among other media), retains the insistence that "eponymous" the adjective refers only to the person who is lending the name. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Fifth Edition), for example, defines "eponymous" as "Named after something else or deriving from an existing name or word: 'Programs such as *He-Man* and *Masters of the Universe* ... were all created with the explicit purpose of selling the eponymous toys to children.'"

Common usage seems to employ both "eponym" and "eponymous" as much to refer to the named thing as to the name giver. There's even an Eponyms app,

for medical students, that lists diseases and conditions named after people, like Hashimoto's thyroiditis. It describes only the namesake condition, not the person for whom it's named.

Garner's *Modern American Usage* says that "today, *eponymous* is commonly (and sloppily) used with the derived name rather than the eponym itself." Using "eponym" instead of "namesake" remains, in the view of the book's eponym, as well as that of the *Times*, unacceptable name-calling.

Staying out of this trap is easy: Use 10-cent words like "named for" or "namesake" instead of the \$50 word "eponym."

—Merrill Perlman

Ring of fire

As concussion controversy rages, boxing writers look in the mirror

IN THE SPAN OF TWO WEEKS LAST FALL, TWO PRIZEFIGHTERS WENT TO THE hospital after their bouts. Francisco Leal, 26, died of a brain injury after a knock-out loss to Raul Hirates on October 19. Magomed Abdusalamov, 32, remains in a medically induced coma as I write, with a blood clot near his brain, after a November 2 fight with Mike Perez. The incidents provoked a flurry of self-flagellating stories in the boxing press, from Mike Gallego's "Boxing is Still a Goddamned Tragedy" on the Gawker site UpperCutting, to Greg Bishop's A1 story in *The New York Times* that explored "why we cover this brutal sport."

A better question might be: Why don't we cover this brutal sport more? For amid the thousands of words about Leal and Abdusalamov, an issue that has become one of the defining sports stories of our time was conspicuously absent: the connection of repeated concussive and subconcussive hits to long-term brain damage that surfaces years later. "Writers tend to write much more often when a guy's battling for his life with a subdural hematoma than when a guy is potentially sustaining consequences from subconcussive hits," says Lou DiBella, one of boxing's biggest promoters. "I don't think the writers give a rat's ass about concussions."

Bart Barry, a reporter for the boxing-news website 15 Rounds, described it more charitably: "I think we all kind of hide from it—what, we're learning more and more, is really bad for you."

But this may be starting to change. And the implications, for boxers, boxing fans, and boxing writers, are profound. "We've all helped make a lot of myths," says *The New York Times*' Bishop, who also covers college football. "Somebody needs to be looking out for these guys." He acknowledged having had "trouble sleeping for a few nights" after covering a fight. "I don't get that watching football," he says.

THAT BOXING IS DANGEROUS IS HARDLY NEWS. JUST LOOK AT MUHAMMAD ALI, Meldrick Taylor, or countless other veterans of the sweet science, their hands shaking, their speech slurred, their gait unsteady. But the growing unease among some boxing writers is something new. It is, surely, a product of everything we're learning about subconcussive hits and their correlation with a degenerative brain disease called chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE. But it just as surely is a result of the public furor that's erupted around this issue in a contact sport with a much higher profile: football [see page 19]. "With the NFL getting into the concussions, people are writing about these things," says Michael Rosenthal,

editor in chief of *The Ring Magazine*. "Before, people were like, 'Okay, this is part of boxing, this isn't something we're focusing on.' Now people are focusing on it."

This new focus on brain trauma and sports has made the rationalization that so many reporters and fans of boxing have leaned on for decades—that the fighters know what they're getting into—a much less sturdy device. Previously, the very nature of the problem made it easy to suppress. Unlike severe injury—a broken bone, a hard knock-out, or even a death in the ring—the effects of repeated concussive and subconcussive hits are insidious, unseen, and therefore under-reported, lurking beneath the surface for years. Their cause can be attributed to other things. In other words, the problem was easy to ignore.

Now boxing faces the same dilemma—if much more acutely, given that head pounding is the point rather than an incidental aspect of the sport—that football and hockey face: The violence that makes the sport compelling has become its biggest problem. "All of the drama comes from the inherent danger," says Jimmy Tobin, who writes for the fight-news website *The Cruel Sport*. "To take away one is to take away the other—it loses its poetry, it loses its metaphor, it loses its gravity, it loses everything."



Mythmaking Manny Pacquiao is mobbed by supporters and the press after his November 24, 2013, victory over Brandon Rios in their welterweight title fight.

As the *Times*' Bishop wrote in the front-page piece on November 21 about Magomed Abdusalamov, "Violence is not simply a part of boxing, it is the best part, the most visceral part, the backbone of the sport. It is what people pay to see."

For this reason alone, *Ring*'s Rosenthal posits, boxing is "not even really a sport. It's sort of life and death, and that's what makes it so fascinating and sort of exciting. But that's what makes me feel so ghoulish—that I get pleasure out of watching it."

Rosenthal speaks openly about boxing's dangers, especially CTE, which multiple studies in the past two years alone have suggested is linked to repeated concussive and subconcussive hits. "We need to educate [the fighters], they need to know what the risks are," Rosenthal says. "We need to protect them—but you can't protect them 100 percent, because then

it wouldn't be boxing. Ultimately, it's their choice."

THE IDEA THAT BOXING'S ADVOCATES and chroniclers are just now learning that getting hit in the head repeatedly is likely to do long-term damage to a fighter's brain is hard for many to digest. "Anyone who says that, I'd say that they're not very smart or they're not paying attention or they're lazy," says Thomas Hauser, a boxing writer for more than two decades, most recently as a contributor to the websites *The Sweet Science* and *Seconds Out*. "There's a reason there's the stereotype of a punch-drunk fighter, going back 100 years. You don't have the stereotype of a punch-drunk baseball player."

As early as 1928, a New Jersey doctor described symptoms similar to CTE: impaired speech, memory, poor motor control. Researchers dubbed the condi-

tion "dementia pugilistica." Forty-five years later, in 1973, a study of 15 retired fighters produced similar findings. "Everybody knew, unless they were purposely deceiving themselves, that they could develop this," says John Stiller, the chief neurologist and physician for the Maryland State Athletic Commission.

What has changed is that new research has given us a better understanding of the nature of the risk. The studies, the most recent from Boston University's Center for the Study of Traumatic Encephalopathy, show that permanent brain damage for professional fighters isn't just a possibility, but more like a certainty. No longer can Ali, Taylor, and the rest be pointed to as *possible* examples of the sad fate that awaits any boxer who is unlucky, careless, stupid, or desperate enough to fight too often, or face a far superior opponent, or take the wrong punch at the wrong angle. They've instead

become closer to predictions. "When professional boxers got in the ring, they gave informed consent to the risk of brain damage and death," says Stiller. "But in my opinion, there wasn't informed consent for possible chronic [neurological] changes."

So now there is zero justification for continuing to ignore or deny this prob-

The idea of giving the fans what they want, no matter the consequences, remains valid for some writers. "They're not coming to your boxing magazine or website to be told they're ghouls, that they're voluntary participants in the ruination of men's brains," says Barry, the reporter for 15 Rounds. "You and I might know it, we might talk

he says. "But at the same time, if you have any kind of sensibility, you've got to feel some kind of, not guilt, but misgivings about it. That's probably too weak a word. Maybe guilt is the right word."

He paused. "I never brought fighters together, I only publicized what they were doing. As the years went on, I was second-guessing myself more and more, because I was starting to see quite vividly the deterioration of Muhammad Ali. It's one thing to die in the ring, it's another thing to die quite slowly and in the public eye. Knowing that these guys who have entertained us for years are now walking around in their heels—doesn't that give that you pause?"

For Bishop, Tobin, and others, it certainly has. Bishop wrote one of the most powerful pieces on boxing and its consequences, about Manny Pacquiao's bout with Juan Manuel Marquez on December 8, 2012 in Las Vegas. It was the pair's fourth fight, and was touted as deciding the "Champion of the Decade." Marquez knocked Pacquiao out in the sixth round:

The shot crumpled Pacquiao (54-5-2) to the canvas, right in front of Bob Arum, his promoter, who held his hands out as if he wanted to catch his prized fighter in his arms. Pacquiao's wife, Jinkee, held her face in both hands and cried. It took her husband several minutes to rise, and when he did, his face was bruised under both eyes, which were vacant. He looked lost.

It is said that all boxing writers have one fight they carry with them. The knockout, in its singular fury, made this the fight that Bishop carries with him. Nevertheless, speaking almost a year later, he says, "Is it conflicting? Yeah, it is. Am I going to watch the next fight, and the next one? Yeah.

"I've been to the Tour de France, Wimbledon, the French Open, seven Super Bowls—there's nothing I've been to like a live fight. It's almost intoxicating." **CJR**

ALAN NEUHAUSER is a reporter and editorial producer for US News & World Report.

Boxing's 'not even really a sport. It's sort of life and death, and that's what makes it so fascinating and exciting,' says *Ring Magazine's* Michael Rosenthal. 'But that's what makes me feel so ghoulish—that I get pleasure out of watching it.'

lem in boxing, and that raises another issue: the idea that getting in the ring, despite the risks, is a matter of free will, a fighter's choice, as Rosenthal suggested. "We sign up for this, you're absolutely right," said Bernard Hopkins, a former world champion and current Showtime commentator who, at age 48, is still fighting. "But boxers are mostly guys that wouldn't have been doctors, wouldn't have been lawyers. I have no Harvard degree. I dropped out in the eighth grade, I went to jail. Boxing is what I could do."

It all presents stark choices for reporters who cover boxing: acknowledge the dangers and the likelihood of developing CTE, and move on; acknowledge the dangers and call attention to them by writing about them; or abandon the sport.

Dan Rafael, a senior boxing writer for ESPN, is in the first category. As one of the reporters who covered the death of Leavander Johnson, 35, who died in the ring in 2005 during a fight in Las Vegas, "I made my peace a long time ago," he says. "It's all a part of boxing, the same way fiery crashes are a part of auto racing, and giant hits are a part of football. That's why we watch, because these guys do stuff that normal people are not willing to do."

about it with some of the other guys at the bar, but we have a professional obligation, if we're going to have any readership, to quiet that."

Others see their professional obligation a different way, owing at least as much to the fighters as to the fans. "You can go to a fight and look at press row and you can see a bunch of middle-aged fat guys cracking jokes about the guys who are putting their lives on the line to entertain people, and that's kind of disgusting," says Hamilton Nolan, a writer for Gawker who also covers boxing for Deadspin and HBO's *Inside Boxing*. "If you're someone who has some kind of voice, you have a responsibility to take these issues on. They're putting their own health at risk for anybody who's a boxing fan. So the people who watch boxing owe something to them in return for that."

William Nack wrote about boxing for *Sports Illustrated* for more than 20 years, covering the careers of Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier and writing some of the most eloquent pieces in sports journalism about their struggles in and out of the ring. But by the turn of the millennium, he'd decided to stop covering boxing. "It is a hell of a sport, it's *mano-a-mano*,"

Game change

In 20 years, football may look very different from the sport we know today. Will the fans, and the media, care?

TWO THOUSAND THIRTEEN WAS AN ANNUS HORRIBILIS FOR THE NATIONAL Football League. Its signature event, the Super Bowl, was subjected to an unscheduled 34-minute delay when the lights went out at the Superdome in New Orleans. In the offseason, the usual spree of player arrests for drunk driving or bringing handguns to airports was dwarfed by New England Patriot tight end Aaron Hernandez' arrest on murder charges.

The issue of player safety, meanwhile, loomed ominously, suggesting the kind of existential threat that the sport hasn't seen since Teddy Roosevelt championed the reforms that led to the creation of the precursor to the NCAA in 1906. The NFL is widely thought to have pressured a television partner, ESPN, to pull out of a documentary it co-produced with *Frontline* on the subject of head trauma. That film (and the accompanying book), *League of Denial*, spelled out in excruciating detail how the sport had soft-pedaled the risks of repeated blows to the head over the years. The headlines were so bad that the NFL's \$765 million settlement in August with a group of former players who sued over concussion negligence was seen as a break for the league. It could have been, *should* have been, much worse, went the thinking.

There was no relief when the season began. The Miami Dolphins' locker-room imbroglio, in which a white veteran lineman, Richie Incognito, was accused of bullying a black rookie, Jonathan Martin, provided myriad avenues for "national discussion"—the euphemism for sports talk radio filling endless hours with the topic and ESPN trotting out every former player and coach on its enormous payroll for an opinion or 12 on the matter.

It all fed into the undercurrent of unease around football in recent years. The conversation, in the media and at the kitchen table, has devolved into whether we should support a game that, once you remove the dramatic endings to the games and the occasional moment of sublime athletic performance, is so ugly at its core.

So far, the NFL battle tank has managed to overwhelm the doubters. For all the PR disasters, pro football has rolled on as America's favorite sport and television attraction.

But is football's position in American culture truly unassailable? We hear a great deal about how the game has already changed irrevocably, how the focus in the last couple of seasons on penalizing helmet-to-helmet hits and other ultra-dangerous blows has legislated the snarl from the game, rendering football far less enjoyable than it was in the "good old days," circa 2008. There is no question that the emphasis on protecting players, at least the highly paid skill players, has led

to not only penalties for what most current fans would regard as "just regular football," but also to inconsistent officiating from game to game. One referee's "hit on a defenseless player" is another ref's happenstance. That dichotomy is frustrating to players and fans alike.

The truth is, the manner in which the average Joe or JoAnn consumes the NFL has changed drastically over the past few years, independent of the rule changes. For instance, fans are more inclined (and able) than ever to consume the league in full, rather than through the narrow lens of his or her favorite team. This perspective is enhanced by fantasy football but also Sunday Ticket, the Red Zone Channel, video games, and the explosion of cable sports outlets, all of which rely on (endless) NFL discussion to fill airtime.

Indeed, watching the league each week is so compelling as a made-for-TV drama that actually attending games seems more and more like a sucker move. Why get stuck sitting through a game in uncomfortable, crappy seats, in bad weather, with all those boring timeouts, fighting awful traffic, and paying outrageous prices, when the full cornucopia of the sport is presented so beautifully to those watching from the couch? This reality must keep NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell awake at night as much as the concussion issue does. In-game atten-

dance numbers are trending downward, with no solution apparent.

The fact that the league's TV product is so awesome must soften these concerns. The value of live sports to embattled television networks ensures that the stratospheric fees they pay for the right to broadcast the games will continue to flow into the NFL's coffers—the most recent contract was worth about \$3 billion a year. There is simply too much money at stake for the league to go the way of boxing, for example, another violent sport that once dominated the national sports consciousness before dropping into near-irrelevance.

But if the NFL is insulated from such a knockout blow, that is not to say that the league's troubles are nothing that better PR and a lot of cash can't solve. One indication of the fundamental problems the sport faces is the dwindling participation in football at the youth level, and what that foretells.

My mother wouldn't let me play football as a kid because she didn't want her skinny, sensitive eldest boy maimed. But I was a rarity, even in a neighborhood replete with overprotective Jewish and Italian mothers. Most kids I knew played football, including my younger, stouter brother.

I now have a skinny, sensitive little boy of my own, and there hasn't even been a discussion in our household of his playing football—and I live in Georgia, where football is a religion. Unlike when I was his age, we are the rule rather than the exception. I've talked to a multitude of parents with young boys, and football isn't even an option. If mentioned at all it is snorted away with a sarcastic, "Yeah, right," as though asking if a child would play football is akin to asking whether he will be allowed to join a gang.

High schools in several states have recently reported steep declines in participation, including hotbeds like Michigan, Maryland, and California. A severe drop in youth football participation in Virginia was cause enough for Goodell to stop counting revenues for a moment and venture to the sidelines of a Loudon County youth practice last season.

So if we stipulate that the NFL isn't going anywhere, and that fewer and

fewer kids are going to take up the game, that leaves a smaller circle of potential players. Who then will accept the risks of a football life for the potential rewards? Kids without means, for whom future health problems like dementia or mangled joints are meaningless in the face of immediate poverty and the hope of future riches that can provide for an entire family tree. In this sense, football, which already relies disproportionately on the underclass for its athletes, will become even more isolated by socioeconomics.

For the moment, football retains an image of universality among its players. The corn-fed farm boy and the beach-bred golden boy are as archetypal as the boy escaping poverty to "play on Sunday," as they say. But that is likely to change, and football may well come to resemble basketball in its outsize place in the fantasies of (primarily) African-American kids who see the sport as the only way out of a life of despair. The difference is that in basketball the only thing left crushed for the majority of kids who don't make it to the promised land are dreams, not vertebrae.

Despite the wince-inducing sensation that the NFL is drifting into dystopian, *Rollerball* territory, there is some reason for optimism, odd as that may seem. For one thing, it's possible that as I write some pigskin-loving Steve Jobs is in a Canton, OH, basement developing a helmet that drastically reduces impact trauma.

But even without a technological fix, the NFL may be able to safeguard players with more changes to tackling and other contact rules, and spreading the message to lower levels of organized football that avoiding injury is a priority. This would essentially continue football on its current path, rendering it not merely different but unrecognizable to older fans.

The key to this future is acceptance. After all, little of the sport from the 1950s remained in place by the 1980s, from strategy to equipment to rules to the players themselves. And watching highlights of games from the Lawrence Taylor era scarcely resembles today's NFL. The media role will be key. Reporting on concussions and the struggles of former players has been excellent, but

at the same time there has been push-back against how the game is changing—often, ironically, from former players who opine on the nation's airwaves. If these household names get on board, it would help grease the skids for acknowledgement of the "new normal."

How comfortable will future fans be with an NFL that is more like a seven-on-seven passing drill than the blood-and-guts spectacle of the last 93 years?

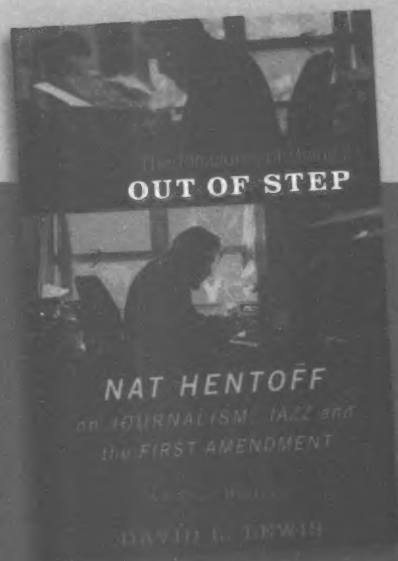
The question is how comfortable will the next generation of fans be with an NFL that is more like a seven-on-seven passing drill than the blood-and-guts spectacle of the last 93 years? My guess is that a nation weaned on fantasy and video-game football, with less and less direct connection to the sport from having played, will be far more willing to accept such a declawed product.

Sure, the refracted glory of seeing one of "your guys" render one of "their guys" insensate, thanks to a massive collision at high speed, has always been a part of football's appeal, as has the vicarious toughness conveyed, through the alchemy of fandom, from player to spectator. But that is just a sliver of what makes football a great game. The balletic grace of the players, the holding of one's breath while a long pass arcs through the sky, the endless ability to strategize along with the coaches and second-guess them afterward—all of this will remain, even in an NFL that has been leached of most of its dangerous physicality.

The NFL has always evolved with the times. Its fans will adapt as well. **CJR**

ROBERT WEINTRAUB writes the *Full-Court Press* column on CJR.org. He writes frequently for *Sports On Earth*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, and others, and is the author of *The Victory Season: The End of WWII and the Birth of Baseball's Golden Age*.

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Time traveler Paol Salopek leads his camels across Ethiopia's Afar desert.



ON THE JOB

Walkabout

BY NAOMI SHARP

PAUL SALOPEK IS GOING FOR A WALK. HE SET OUT in Ethiopia at the beginning of 2013. If all goes well, he'll arrive at the tip of Chile in 2020. Salopek, 51 and a veteran foreign correspondent, is retracing the 60,000-year-old route of the first humans who emigrated from Africa, through the Middle East and Asia, and into the Americas.

Christened "Out of Eden," the project grew partly out of Salopek's love of literature, particularly the tradition of quest stories that dates back to Greek epic poetry. Such stories gave his journey its structure and mission: Follow a prehistoric route in an effort to understand the modern world more deeply. By "inching slowly across the surface of the Earth," as Salopek puts it, he wants to discover "links between stories," like globalization and climate change, "that are covered in a really granular, segmented way by the media."

The project is funded by the National Geographic Society and the Knight Foundation. Salopek writes stories about his travels, transcribes interviews with people he meets, and posts photographs and videos at nationalgeographic.com and outofedenwalk.com. Every 100 miles he snaps a picture of the ground and the sky, takes a panoramic shot of his surroundings, records some audio, and then asks the nearest person three questions: *Who are you? Where do you come from? Where are you going?*

Salopek spent much of his career covering developing countries, winning two Pulitzer Prizes reporting on Africa for the *Chicago Tribune*. As a result, he is comfortable in conditions Westerners might consider extreme. "Maybe the most important thing that people might find extreme," he says, "is the capacity to wait, which the global north seems to find increasingly incomprehensible. The ability to sit under a tree and wait for something to happen—it's a way of perceiving the world that is getting rarer as the world becomes more wired."

The objective is to walk for seven years straight—no coming home for holidays. His "long-suffering wife" visits him on the road, as do his brothers and sisters. But, Salopek says, "There's no guarantee that in 2020 I'm going to be walking onto a beach in Chile. That is the goal, but I reserve the right to stop walking. And that itself becomes part of the journey." **CJR**

NAOMI SHARP is a CJR intern.

JOHN STANMEYER / NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Evgeny v the Internet

Evgeny Morozov wants to convince us that digital technology can't save the world, and he's willing to burn every bridge from Cambridge to Silicon Valley to do it

By Michael Meyer

Depending on whom you ask, Evgeny Morozov is either the next Assange, feared, loathed, or useless; a writer about digital technology working today, just 29 years old, in an industry he was born in Belarus, he appeared as if out of nowhere in the late aughts, amid the conference-goers and problem solvers working to shape our digital futures, a hostile messenger from a faraway land brashly declaring the age of big ideas and interconnected bliss to be, well, bullshit. ¶ To say that Morozov has gone out of his way to irritate powerful and influential people in the tech world

doesn't quite capture it. Doing so is his primary occupation. In the Morozovian worldview, New York University professor and social-media theorist Clay Shirky is a "consultant-cum-intellectual"; Google's mission is "to monetize all of the world's information and make it universally inaccessible and profitable"; and Tim O'Reilly, the Silicon Valley publisher and venture capitalist who coined "Web 2.0," is an Orwellian "meme hustler" and the main culprit behind "the enduring emptiness of our technology debates." To millions of viewers, TED talks are inspirational speeches about "ideas worth spreading" in science and technology. To Morozov they are a "sinister" hyping of "ideas no footnotes can support."

Or try this passage. It's a takedown of a work of technological triumphalism called *Hybrid Reality*, but it doubles as a summary of his thinking about the entirety of the tech discourse: "[P]erhaps this is what the Hybrid Age is all about: marketing masquerading as theory, charlatans masquerading as philosophers, a New Age cult masquerading as a university, business masquerading as redemption, slogans masquerading as truths."

The entire Morozov aesthetic is in this sentence: the venom, the derision, the reverse jujitsu of his opponents' sanctimony, the bald accusation that all the talk about a new age of human flourishing is nothing but an attempt to vamp

the speaker's consulting business. Tech enthusiasts channel hope. Tech skeptics channel worry. Morozov channels anger, and this can be a very satisfying emotion to anyone unconvinced that everything is getting better. Leon Wieseltier, who has published some of Morozov's most acid criticism at *The New Republic*, compares him to the ferocious jazz musician Charles Mingus, who once responded to an interviewer who accused him of "hollerin'" by saying, "I feel like hollerin'." I asked Morozov if he considers his Twitter feed, which spews a constant stream of invective and absurdist satire, to be performative. This was a bit like asking Mingus if he considers jazz performative. "Absolutely," he said. "I consider it art."

At some point, though, the hollerin' ends, everyone's feelings are hurt, and it's time to talk about what we've learned. Because Morozov isn't just "an intellectual hit man," as one writer put it. He wants to be taken seriously, and he has the output to demand it. He's written two *New York Times* Notable Books of the year, and his influence is global and growing. He's published dozens of essays in some of the world's most prestigious publications, and his monthly column, besides appearing in *Slate*, is translated for leading newspapers in Germany, Spain, Italy, China, and several other countries. In Morozov's estimation, if Google executive chairman Eric Schmidt pays attention to him at all it's

'S.



not because he can publish an op-ed in *The New York Times*, but because he can publish an op-ed across Europe.

Many of Morozov's opponents dismiss him as a spoiled child, someone who sits in the corner refusing, as Tim O'Reilly once said, to be "useful," shouting insults at the adults as they role up their sleeves and solve the world's problems. Reviewing Morozov's second book in *The Washington Post*, Columbia law professor Tim Wu spoke of Morozov's "promise" as a thinker before lamenting, "One suspects he aspires to be a Bill O'Reilly for intellectuals." Morozov faces similar criticism even among his supporters. He once defended his style by saying, "We've got too many priests and not enough jesters," an explanation Joshua Cohen, the Stanford professor who brought Morozov to Palo Alto on a fellowship and published some of his earliest long-form work in *Boston Review*, told me is "bullshit. There's a vast open field between priests and jesters."

Morozov insists that his refusal to be *useful* is its own kind of usefulness—and even, as he recently wrote in one of his essays for German newspapers, an intellectual duty. Traditionally, this is an uncontroversial definition of the role of the critic in intellectual life. But not in the relentlessly sunny realm of the tech gurus, where such obstinance must be baffling, even perverse. The current discourse around digital technology is more nuanced than the caricature Morozov often presents, but its defining idea is that we are living through a benevolent revolution, and that we're all united by good intentions as we search for new models for our economy and our lives. In this culture of mutual validation, Morozov's targets are the makers, the innovators, and the disruptors—the people doing, as frequent Morozov punching bag Jeff Jarvis put it, "God's work."

Morozov is a heretic in this world. Whether he's a heretic worth listening to is an open question, despite the fact that many of the most influential shapers of our digital lives have already concluded he is not.

Talking nonsense

Engaging with Morozov, in person and on the page, produces a kind of culture shock. The most benignly progressive ideas can, in Morozov's hands, become gloomy and confounding—for instance, he believes that people trying to lose weight with fitness-tracking apps are setting a dangerous precedent that could foster abusive practices by health insurers. There are many aspects of his biography and personality that don't add up in a way that an outside observer would find coherent or justifiable, or even meaningful. Neither technophile nor technophobe, he's frequently described as "Silicon Valley's fiercest critic." But like the rest of us, he checks his late-model iPhone during pauses in conversation. He cultivates a strident and confident public persona, but, in August 2012, made the humble decision to subject himself to a history of science PhD program and is now working toward his general examination at Harvard. Both in conversation and in his writing, he shifts freely between serious argument and absurdist jokes; it's a point of pride that his audience must sort out the difference. When talking about his professional ambitions, for instance, he says: "It might be that in five years I'll realize that what I need to be doing is running a

revolutionary high school somewhere in Denmark. I don't entirely exclude that possibility."

He's decidedly not American, but doesn't identify as a Belarusian, either. He doesn't even like visiting Belarus, and of all the reasons he might use to justify that attitude, the one he chooses to relate is that he is far too picky about his diet. (He recently lost nearly 100 pounds by working out on a rowing machine in his apartment while watching European art-house cinema.) He says with a smirk that he likes his coffee made just so, and that he needs to eat sushi at least once a week. He hates Palo Alto ("a horrible place") but loves Stanford's Green Library so much that, in an ideal world, he would spend winters in Palo Alto and summers in Berlin. When writing or reading about matters digital, he stashes his phone and router cable in a time-locked safe to prevent distractions. When he was mocked online about this he responded: "Believe me, I've gone through all the necessary literature in moral philosophy and I still don't see a problem."

Morozov's friend Leonard Benardo, who directs the fellowship program at the Open Society Foundations, offered this advice when I interviewed him: "If a musician were to apply a time signature to Morozov, it wouldn't be 4/4, it would be some crazy 11/5 time signature, sort of Steely Dan meets Stockhausen. Imputing rationality to someone who works at that time signature is a bit of a fool's errand."

Growing up in the potassium-mining town of Soligorsk, where half the city's population works for the government-owned mine, Morozov says he made the calculation at age 6 or 7 that he would have to work his way to a life abroad. When he was an adolescent, his parents, who both worked in professional positions at the mine until they retired, hired a friend of the family to tutor Morozov in English. In addition to working with her daily for five years, he practiced several hours a day on his own, essentially devoting the period of his life from ages 12 to 17 to preparing for the SAT. His reward was a full scholarship from the Open Society Foundations to attend American University in Bulgaria, where he joined a collection of strivers from throughout the former Soviet bloc. The default major for that crowd was either business administration or economics, so Morozov double majored just to be safe. "These were hungry students, and Evgeny was certainly one of the more hungry," says Aernout van Lynden, who began teaching at the university after 23 years as a war correspondent in the Middle East and the Balkans.

Morozov met van Lynden when he asked the professor for help finding funds to attend a conference, and van Lynden offered to cover the cost himself. After that, Morozov audited several of van Lynden's journalism courses, hoping to improve his writing, and became fatefully immersed in the world of criticism when, at van Lynden's suggestion, he started reading *The New York Review of Books*. One can sense in Morozov's attraction to van Lynden a desire to model himself on courageous figures, and, in fact, he dedicated his first book to his professor, saying that he "showed me what courage and decency look like." It also is clear that van Lynden represented a new and important presence in Morozov's life. In the acknowledgments of that *same* book, Morozov thanks his family this way: "Despite the fact that they don't

fully grasp what it is that I do, my family back in Belarus have all been very supportive of my intellectual quest."

In summer 2004, Morozov underwent a quintessentially Morozovian life transition—that is to say, he encountered something he thought was "crap" and made a vigorous effort to escape it. In this case, he spent what he calls "the 10 worst weeks of my life" as an intern for J.P. Morgan in England, something considered the height of achievement by most of his peers at university. To Morozov, though, it was confirmation that he had no future in finance. He finished his degree anyway, then, unsure what new direction his life might take, made his way to a non-degree liberal arts program in Berlin.

Morozov read widely on international affairs, and during this period he encountered the excitement that was growing in America about blogs as a political tool. Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign, in particular, had brought ideas about online organizing and fundraising into the mainstream. Meanwhile, the role of new media in politics was playing out in a much messier and less well-documented way in pro-democratic uprisings across Eastern Europe—the so-called Color Revolutions. According to news reports, new tools such as text messaging, blogs, and even video games had played an important and poorly understood role in this new strain of democratic movement. Morozov started to connect the dots between the American blogosphere and events on the ground in his home region. "Howard Dean lost, but in Eastern Europe you had regimes overthrown," Morozov says. "Milosevic was headed to the Hague, Shevardnadze was overthrown in Georgia, Yushchenko was coming to power in Ukraine. You could actually see that things might change."

He began writing about the political situation in Belarus for Transitions, a Prague-based NGO that encouraged the adoption of new media by independent journalists in the former Soviet bloc. In 2006, Transitions hired Morozov as its first director of new media, a job that had him traveling widely—at age 22—to train journalists and bloggers throughout Eastern Europe.

"Thinking that you are living through a revolution and hold the key to how it will unfold is, I confess, rather intoxicating," Morozov would later write. Much of his work from this period is preserved, and it's fascinating to watch a YouTube video from 2007 that shows a chubby kid holding forth in a thick accent about how digital media might transform the sclerotic and indecent politics of his region. Asked by a peppy interviewer what he sees as the "most innovative" development of recent years, the young Evgeny rattles off a list of possibilities that makes him sound a lot like the "cyber-utopians" he would soon make a career out of skewering. "Definitely crowdsourcing," he says. "Definitely applying the logic of the open-source software movement to broader ideas, to broader processes." Another video from the same conference shows him giving a buzzword-filled presentation called "Putting Community at the Core of Innovation in New Media."

Here's Morozov today, talking about the guy in that video: "I was 23 and in a room with people in their 40s and 50s, all of them editors and journalists, and I was talking some nonsense and they were all buying it. The degree to which both sides were unaware of just how stupid the entire setup was just makes you very scared."

'Thinking you are living through a revolution and hold the key to how it will unfold is, I confess, rather intoxicating.'

A critic evolves

Morozov obsessively, compulsively, sees the flaws in everything, including his own work. This trait has led him to burn numerous bridges with former allies, most notably with Ethan Zuckerman, who now directs the Center for Civic Media at MIT. An advocate of the Web's ability to connect a global citizenry, Zuckerman brought Morozov to the board of the Open Society Foundations' Information Program in 2008, an important step in Morozov's rise that eventually helped him land a fellowship in New York. Two years later, Morozov began slamming Zuckerman publicly for, among other things, taking research money from the State Department, and the two haven't spoken since 2011. Zuckerman declined to be interviewed for this piece. "I've alienated so many people that whatever conference invitation I get I look who's there and say, 'No, I don't want to be there,'" Morozov says. "It gets awkward for me. It gets awkward for them. So screw it. It saves me a lot of time for reading and writing."

By mid-2008, Morozov had grown frustrated with his work at Transitions. Many of the projects, he says, "didn't turn out the way I wanted them to turn out. I also saw that, in places where they worked, the governments were far more sophisticated than we thought. They were engaging in new types of surveillance. They were hiring bloggers. There was nothing about this set of tools that magically made them beneficial only to one side."

His sense of failure in these high-stakes battles is not enough, by itself, to explain Morozov's next transformation—into a world-famous technology skeptic. When he started at Transitions, he and his colleagues had to work hard to convince wary funders that new-media training was a prudent investment in countries with low online connectivity and long histories of crushing dissent. Eventually, though, the narrative shifted, and a range of powerful players—from the media to the State Department—were suddenly touting these digital strategies as the world's best hope for building democracy. Morozov found himself, really for the first time, outside the intellectual mainstream—a place where he would feel increasingly at home.

Jeremy Druker, Morozov's boss at Transitions, describes it this way: "I think in many ways what Evgeny has become is a response, not to those early wonder years when we were all confused but enthusiastic about figuring out what could be done, but to everyone getting on the bandwagon and it becoming a real fad."

This “fad” is extensively documented (and derided) in Morozov’s first book, *The Net Delusion*, which was published in January 2011. In it he calls the idea that technology is the key ingredient to the promotion of democracy “cyber-utopianism,” and shows just how thoroughly this idea has pervaded both the public and political consciousness.

As Morozov watched the cyber-utopian fad grow, his distrust of it began to harden into a cyber-pessimism that could at times be just as dogmatic. After leaving Transitions, Morozov eventually ended up as a fellow at OSF (a funder of Transitions), which brought him to New York in August 2008. The following year Morozov gave—wait for it—a TED talk in Oxford called, “How the Net Aids Dictators.” This was sort of a coming-out party for Evgeny the skeptic, and an important step in turning that skepticism into a brand. It’s another video worth watching and quite a contrast to his enthusing about crowdsourcing just two years before. In the video, he stands in the middle of the stage wearing a wrinkled blue shirt open at the neck. There is a humble, self-effacing air about him, as if he barely expects to be listened to. His only gesture is to move his hands up and down, often in unison, as he emphasizes his points about how all the digital tools and ideas the audience is so excited about are enabling surveillance and targeting of dissidents by thugs and autocrats worldwide.

“Evgeny becomes attached to particular ideas that he believes, for the good of the thinking public, need to be debunked,” says OSF’s Benardo. He compares Morozov to social critics like Karl Kraus and Dwight MacDonald, professional buzzkills who “felt almost divinely anointed” in their efforts to tear down false hopes and received wisdom.

When his OSF fellowship ended in 2009, Morozov began another one at Georgetown University, where his innate critical temperament once again homed in on his own work. He says at Georgetown he was frequently the “internet guy” in a room full of foreign-policy experts. “People didn’t want my take on the future of the Middle East; they wanted my take on the future of the internet in the Middle East,” he says. “It’s a bizarre way to compartmentalize the issues.”

Morozov wasn’t an expert on the Middle East. And he now realized that his usefulness as an “internet expert” (or, as the business-administration major was dubbed in his TED bio, an “internet scientist”) depended entirely on the largely unexamined assumption that new media had a coherent and predictable effect on each country (or industry) it touched—and that he and the rest of the “internet scientists” understood these effects and the internal logic that produced them. It was an assumption he had begun to seriously doubt. Without this assumed coherence, neither he nor any other internet expert could be much use to the Middle East analysts or anyone else.

It’s worth noting that the assumption of a coherent and benevolent internet is much more pervasive than just a conviction among policy and tech elites who stand to benefit from the idea. The belief that technology can solve some of our thorniest problems taps into deep-rooted American notions about the nature of progress and national destiny— notions that Morozov himself had helped to export during

the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe. Morozov’s anxiety about his role as an “internet expert” made him less interested in arguing about whether Twitter benefits autocrats more than revolutionaries, and more interested in parsing the cultural zeitgeist that, for instance, led Ronald Reagan to say in 1989 that, “the Goliath of totalitarianism will be brought down by the David of the microchip.” Morozov’s work as a skeptic attacked the surface of this phenomenon, but he wanted to attack the core—the way we think and talk about technology. He wasn’t immediately sure how to do it.

When his fellowship at Georgetown ended, Joshua Cohen offered Morozov a fellowship at Stanford. He spent his time in Palo Alto trying to find a new intellectual footing. “Throughout most of 2011 and possibly early 2012, I had no idea what to do intellectually,” Morozov says. “It was becoming clear to me that I could no longer just go on making proclamations about the internet. But it wasn’t clear to me what other possible framework could take its place. I didn’t have enough theoretical background to figure out what to do.”

Published simultaneously with the onset of the Arab Spring, *Net Delusion* pushed an intellectually confused 26-year-old into the international spotlight. Yet this is when Morozov wrote some of his most pungent work. Rather than give rise to ambivalence, as one might expect, the doubts Morozov had about his own qualifications made him more determined to question the expertise of others.

Throughout 2011, he wrote harsh takedowns of every “internet expert” in sight. The most notable was Kevin Kelly, the revered *Wired* writer who, as someone who helped launch the early online community The WELL, played an important role in shaping the modern internet. Morozov dubbed Kelly the “*éminence grise* of Silicon Valley,” then dismissed his book, *What Technology Wants*, as little more than a work of promotional literature for the tech industry. It’s typical of Morozov’s writing during this stretch, which emphasized the idea that both the industry and its enthusiasts were motivated more by profits than public service.

I asked Morozov how he managed to be so confident in his criticism of others while going through period after period of self-doubt: “It’s very easy,” he said. “You get your facts and you revise your opinions. I write things. I hear from people. I read more. I figure out that some of my earlier frameworks were probably incoherent and theoretically unsound. I remember those and move somewhere else.”

Cohen, who Morozov says is one of a handful of people who read his work in draft form, has a harsher take on the same concept: “He reads other people’s stuff and thinks on very close inspection it doesn’t add up. And, of course, on very close inspection his stuff doesn’t always add up. I don’t think he has written anything yet that withstands the kind of close critical scrutiny that he gives to other people’s work.”

The cost of bullshit

My first conversation with Morozov took place on a weekday morning in a busy coffee shop near Harvard Square. He enrolled in Harvard’s history of science program after determining, over many 15-hour days spent reading in the Green Library, that the history of science offered him the

intellectual grounding he lacked in his effort to find a new framework to talk about technology and its role in society. He moved to Cambridge in August 2012. Anyone thinking this might signal the emergence of a quieter, more tenure track-minded Evgeny would be mistaken. On this morning Morozov was talking about bullshit—specifically the fight against bullshit as an organizing principle in his work.

“Part of my job is to raise the cost of producing bullshit in this area, and to make sure people pay for that with shame, with being ridiculed, with harsh reviews, whatever,” he says.

He finished his second book, *To Save Everything, Click Here*, just before arriving at Harvard, and it was published in March 2013. Displaying a near-maniacal obsession with bullshit, the book dismantles two -isms Morozov perceives in our technology debate that he considers dangerous. The first is “solutionism,” the idea that we should recast our problems, from political gridlock to weight loss, as things to be solved primarily through technological efficiency. The second is “internet-centrism,” which he describes as the “firm conviction that we are living through unique, revolutionary times, in which the previous truths no longer hold.”

‘Part of my job is to raise the cost of producing bullshit in this area,’ Morozov says. ‘To make sure people pay for that.’

At bottom, Morozov says his work is an attempt to integrate the debates about technology into the broader debates about politics, economics, history, and culture—areas of study with much richer traditions and far greater intellectual resources for tackling the many challenges that technology presents. Such a shift in discourse, he feels, would limit the influence of those advocating narrow technological solutions to what are essentially non-technological problems—like spreading democracy—and would rob a word like “disruption” of the positive connotation it has acquired as a force for progress, allowing it to be seen instead as a painful example of neoliberal economics. When discussed in purely digital terms, for instance, letting a company like Uber transform a city’s taxi service is a no-brainer. When the digital is integrated into the political, however, this becomes a more complicated debate about regulation and infrastructure and the rights of cab drivers.

Most radically, he’s used the phrase “the internet” exclusively in scare quotes since *To Save Everything* was published. It’s not that he denies the existence of transformative networked technologies. It’s just that he considers the larger notions of innate goodness and inevitability that “the internet” has been consciously imbued with to be bullshit. “You think about Big Pharma, Big Oil,” he says. “The mere fact

that we use the term ‘big’ to talk about them means we’ve figured out that they probably have interests that diverge from those of the public. Nobody uses the term ‘big data’ in that sense.”

He’s devoting his time at Harvard, and several years thereafter, to writing a kind of pre-history of the internet that, he thinks, will uncover the origins of the current intellectual framework we use to make sense of all things digital, tracing the roots of the discourse about “discontinuities” and “revolutions” and showing how this discourse limits our thinking. Take the privacy debate, for example. It’s tempting to think of the data-collection abilities of Facebook, Google—and even the NSA—as purely a consequence of our digital age, and therefore as an inevitable feature of progress to which we must adapt. But Morozov notes the many ways of thinking about privacy that are made invisible by this assumption. Privacy, he wrote in a recent essay, is something democracies have always had to grapple with, and even a “means of achieving a certain ideal of democratic politics, where citizens are trusted to be more than just self-contented suppliers of information to all-seeing and all-optimizing technocrats.”

Farrar, Straus and Giroux is scheduled to publish the pre-history book and, if Morozov’s hyping of it is to be believed, it will be the contribution that Joshua Cohen and others expect from him. And that Morozov expects of himself. Soon after *To Save Everything* was published, he tweeted: “The right way to think about [the book] is that it’s a grenade thrown to test the waters. In 5 years, I am returning in a tank.”

People apparently didn’t read much into this bombast other than to make fun of his rare slip into mixed metaphor. The “tank” is very much a work in progress, and for now is mostly just Morozov’s familiar hollerin’. Still, the tweet is notable for its insecurity about his previous work, its ambition about what’s to come, and its casting of technology debates in the terms of battle—almost, one might say, as a fight against tyranny.

“He really is a kind of political intellectual without a party,” says John Summers, the editor of *The Baffler* who published Morozov’s 16,000-word destruction of Tim O’Reilly, noting that there isn’t a clear constituency ready to act on any of the ideas posited in Morozov’s writing. “There’s a history of this in the United States, exactly these kinds of figures, and we don’t have them as much anymore. We have public intellectuals, but we don’t have a lot of political intellectuals, because most people make the early calculation that they’re not going to get very far doing that.”

Morozov, in contrast, seems to have made the early calculation that he *would* get far, and has fought himself into a position of influence in order to advance an argument about the people and ideas and industries he believes we should trust less. Whether you find this useful depends on what you have at stake. But with Morozov, the audience is always left to sort out where the critique ends and the joke begins. “I’m very conscious of what I’m doing,” he says. “I’m destroying the internet-centric world that has produced me. If I’m truly successful, I should become irrelevant.” **CJR**

MICHAEL MEYER is a CJR staff writer.

Media darling

Malala Yousafzai's long and delicate dance with the press

BY SHAHAN MUFTI

In 2009, *The New York Times* posted a two-part documentary on its website about Pakistan's battle against Taliban militants. At the center of the documentary was an 11-year-old girl from the Swat region in northern Pakistan named Malala Yousafzai, and her father, Ziauddin. The story begins in early January of that year, when the Taliban and the Pakistani military fought for control of the Swat Valley. Malala's home was Mingora, the largest city in the valley and a focal point of the conflict. ¶ Today, of course, the world knows Malala as the courageous girl who became

an international *cause célèbre* after the Taliban shot her in 2012. Last year, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and published a memoir, *I Am Malala*. But in 2009, to the world beyond Pakistan at least, she was just another girl trying to better herself in a troubled land. The narrative arc of the film follows the family into exile during the fighting, and also the personal and political evolution of Malala and her father, a community organizer and the founder of the girls' school where Malala studied.

When we first meet Malala at the outset of the film, she is sitting next to Ziauddin. "I want to get my education," she says, "and I want to become a doctor." She then begins to weep. Over the six months, as captured in the two parts of the documentary, we see Malala shift from being just one of many students in her school to someone determined to make a difference. "I have a new dream," she says as she prepares to return home toward the end of the film. "I must be a politician to save this country." In the end, we see her, her father, and a few others meet with the late Richard Holbrooke, who at the time was President Obama's top official in the region, to discuss the situation in Swat.

In her autobiography, Malala writes that her "father was in a bad mood" the day the *Times* cameras first came into their home. One of Ziauddin's friends had persuaded him to participate in the project, she explains, but her uncle said "over and over again that it was too risky to have cameras in the house."

As for Malala, "I had done a lot of television interviews," she writes, "but I had never done anything like this." The camera followed her "even as I said my prayers and brushed my teeth." But the family had decided to cooperate. "My father knew this could be our megaphone to the outside world."

Malala and her father had already been interviewed dozens of times on TV, radio, and in print in Pakistan, often as a father-daughter team. The activist-father and his eloquent, telegenic daughter were leading a charge against the Taliban administration in Swat at a time when many in their community were afraid to speak up. When it came to the Taliban's campaign to close girls' schools in the valley, the Yousafzai family was threatened ideologically but also financially—education was, after all, the family business.

Interactions with the media have shaped much of Malala's young life, but her relationship with the media has too often been discussed in simplistic terms. Her detractors portray her as a media pawn, manipulated by a bevy of governments, militaries, and ideologically motivated news outlets to further their various agendas. Supporters, meanwhile, have cast her as Pakistan's Mother Teresa, a saintly figure who speaks and acts only from a place of purity.

The truth of Malala's relationship with the press is much more complex, and the *Times* documentary is representative of the delicate dance that the father-daughter team has participated in for years with the national and



Savvy source Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head by the Taliban for campaigning for girls' education, poses for pictures before an event launching her memoir, *I Am Malala*, at the Southbank Centre in London, October 20, 2013.

international media. They have let the media in, sometimes against their better judgment, and always with an eye to what the spotlight might do for them and their ambitions. At different times Malala has been an anonymous source, a named source, a character, and an expert in media stories. In each of these roles, she and her father found a platform for their admirable mission of educating girls. But in doing so they also became players in a multifaceted struggle between militant organizations, the Pakistani state, and the US government and military, in which information and news have been a most-potent weapon.

MALALA SETS UP HER AUTOBIOGRAPHY WITH A PROLOGUE that describes her day on October 9, 2012—"the day when everything changed." She was riding home from school with 20 of her classmates and three teachers. They had just turned a corner off the main road when a young, bearded man in light-colored clothes waved the van down. Another young man, wearing a handkerchief around his face, approached the open rear of the vehicle. It was in the few heartbeats before the man swung onto to the tail of the van that Malala's best friend said to her: "Look, it's one of those journalists coming to ask for an interview."

For an instant, Malala was probably prepared to slip into the "interview," a discreet social interaction that she had practiced endlessly and at which she excelled. Malala was expecting a microphone to be thrust in her face, and instead saw a black Colt .45.

It was not entirely unwarranted for the 16-year-old girl to mistake her would-be assassin for a journalist. Journalists had hovered around Malala—and she around them—for years. She made her first television appearance at age 11 on a Pashtun-language channel in Pakistan to talk about the Taliban influence in her valley. The BBC later published her blog under a pseudonym and brought her writing to a global audience. She took journalism courses offered by the London-based Institute of War and Peace Reporting in Pakistan. She took her first airplane ride, to the megalopolis of Karachi, for a television interview. In her downtime she watched *Ugly Betty*, the TV show about a girl thrown into the deep end of the New York magazine world, and "dreamed of one day going to New York and working on a magazine like her." So inundated was her life with the news media that when her friends at school decided to throw her a surprise party after she won the National Peace Award, they went with the most believable

cover story: a group of journalists was waiting to interview her at school.

Even the Taliban came into Malala's life through the radio waves. Fazlullah, a self-styled mullah and the leader of the Taliban in the Swat region, began preaching his message over an FM radio frequency in 2006, when Malala was 9 years old. FM radio was a revolutionary platform introduced, along with private satellite television, by Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's military ruler at the time.

Radio gave the mullah access to people inside their homes, a highly private space in Pashtun culture. Radio Mullah, as he became known around Swat, even had access to women, who have traditionally been excluded from public discourse. "Women would tell him their dreams and he would pray for them," Malala writes in her book. Her mother, she says, "enjoyed" his stories.

Fazlullah also used the FM frequencies illegally, filling airtime with Koran recitations and statements attributed

by wading through reams of conflicting press releases. But when the war with the Taliban entered Swat, the media were faced for the first time with covering an actual war—a bloody war with real events, real sources, and real characters.

The people of Swat were caught in the middle. "The media in Swat were under pressure to give positive coverage to the Taliban," Malala writes in her book. "But many local journalists were unhappy about what was happening to their valley and they gave us a powerful platform, as we would say things they didn't dare to." In such a situation, Malala's voice stood out. In an interview by ATV, Pakistan's only private Pashtun-language channel, Malala was interviewed for the first time, along with a dozen or so girls, "about girls dropping out of school due to the militancy."

Malala instantly impressed. While most other girls stopped appearing for fear of reprisals by the Taliban, Malala began offering herself for more interviews. With the support of her father, she developed her skill at reading journalists and responding to their questions. Malala also became a faithful believer in the power of the interview to change the course of history. One day, in 2007, she arrived at the offices of Geo News, one of the largest TV news outlets in Pakistan, and saw a wall of screens tuned to dozens of stations broadcasting simultaneously in Pakistan. Malala had an epiphany: "The media needs interviews. They want to interview a small girl, but the girls are scared." But she knew that she was different. "I have a father who isn't scared, who stands by me." Malala submitted to the power of the media with the zeal of a convert.

I began to see that the pen and the words that come from it can be much more powerful than machine guns, tanks or helicopters,' Malala recalls in her book.

to the prophet Muhammad, some of which spoke of the importance of women staying hidden from the public eye. He directed his followers to destroy television sets and DVD players, instruments that he claimed threatened public morality. This was not exactly revolutionary talk in the conservative region of Swat, and the government initially chose to ignore him.

Soon, though, Radio Mullah began inveighing against the state. He railed against the polio-vaccination campaign, which he claimed was a Western plot to render Muslims infertile, and preached against education for girls, which put him squarely at odds with the Yousafzais. In summer 2007, after the military killed hundreds of religious students in a standoff at a mosque in Islamabad, Fazlullah declared war against the Pakistani army. The military sent troops into Swat, but the offensive failed and by 2009 Fazlullah had effectively taken control of the entire Swat Valley.

Before this, Pakistan's fight against the Taliban had been limited to the tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. It had been raging for years, and the media had been severed from the isolated and autonomous region. For the most part, the media covered the intermittent conflict in the tribal areas

MALALA BURST ONTO THE INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE news media scene, anonymously and unexpectedly, in 2009. An editor for the BBC's Urdu service was searching for a female teacher or a young girl who could document her life under Taliban rule in Swat, when he met Malala's father. The editor asked Ziauddin if he had any ideas. "Why not me?" Malala remembers asking her father.

To introduce her to his journalistic concept, the editor told Malala about Anne Frank and the diary she kept under Nazi rule. But instead of leaving Malala with a pen and paper, the editor began working closely with her over the phone, like a reporting partner, or a source. "He would guide me, asking me questions about my day, and asking me to tell him small anecdotes or talk about my dreams," writes Malala. The editor would then post her responses as weekly diary entries on the BBC's Urdu website. The blog appeared under the pseudonym "Gul Makai." The editor instructed Malala that she must not let anyone, not even her best friends at school, know about the scheme, as it would put her life in danger.

This was a more intricate and involved journalistic process than what Malala was used to with the Pakistani media, and she revealed her more personal and honest thoughts. It "proved to be such a hit, the blog was translated into English," Jon Williams, the BBC's world news editor, later wrote. It was posted on the main BBC website in early 2009. The BBC also made a recording of the diary using another girl's voice. "I began to see that the pen and the words that come from

it can be much more powerful than machine guns, tanks or helicopters," Malala recalls in her book.

But through the process of working with the BBC, Malala was also learning more about the art of the interview and the complexities of journalistic storytelling. "I got to know the kind of things Hai Kakar [the editor] wanted me to talk about," she writes. "He liked personal feelings and what he called 'pungent sentences,' and also the mix of everyday life with the terror of the Taliban." Malala gave the interviewer what he wanted, and she was rewarded. "It was thrilling to see my words on the website."

In May 2009, a few months after *The New York Times* had posted the first part of its documentary about Malala, a newly elected Pakistani government signed a peace deal with the Taliban in Swat. Musharraf's unsuccessful attempt to dislodge the militants from the valley had left the new government with few ideas, and it ceded the judicial and administrative responsibilities in the valley to Fazlullah and his armed followers. The peace deal became a lightning rod in the relationship between the United States and Pakistan. Washington, which was already knee deep in the Pakistani conflict in the country's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, was pulled deeper into Pakistan's internal affairs. "I think that we cannot underscore the seriousness of the existential threat posed to the state of Pakistan," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the House Foreign Affairs Committee in April 2009. If the Taliban were to overrun the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, Clinton told Fox News, "then they would have the keys to the nuclear arsenal of Pakistan, and we can't even contemplate that."

I was based in Pakistan at the time and had been reporting from there since 2007, closely tracking the conflict in Swat. The idea that Fazlullah's militants were poised to overrun the Pakistani capital and snatch the keys to the country's nuclear arsenal was ludicrous. The statements were simply diplomatic and military rhetoric designed to ratchet up pressure on the Pakistani government to disengage from the peace efforts with the Taliban, whose brethren the Americans were struggling to defeat next door in Afghanistan.

The American news media, though, provided a shrill soundtrack of overwrought panic, uncritically parroting the alarmist statements from the Obama administration. *The New York Times* published an editorial titled "60 Miles from Islamabad," in reference to what had become something of a catchphrase to describe how far the Taliban-administered territory had pushed toward the capital. "If the army cannot or will not defend its own territory against the militants," the editorial asked, echoing Clinton, "how can anyone be sure it will protect Pakistan's 60 or so nuclear weapons?" The American media were perceived in Pakistan to be Washington's partner in crime.

The peace negotiations did finally break down in May 2009. The Pakistani military moved into the Swat Valley once again, more decisively this time, dislocating more than a million people who became refugees inside their own country, including Malala and her family. The battle turned out to be relatively easy, and by July 15 the Taliban had been beaten

back. Washington was pleased, and the refugees began returning home.

In late October 2009, two weeks after *The New York Times* aired the second part of its documentary, Secretary of State Clinton visited Islamabad. The *Times* noted in a dispatch that "engaging Pakistan's unruly media was perhaps Mrs. Clinton's most important job on this visit." Newspapers and television, the *Times* said, "drive public opinion more here than in many countries, and the coverage is sharply critical of the United States, tapping into deep Pakistani resentment." The media, in other words, were becoming a battlefield in the shadowy conflict in Pakistan. Richard Holbrooke, the article said, "is developing a plan to encourage new FM radio stations as a way to counterbalance propaganda from radio stations that fall into the hands of the Taliban or other militants." Some of the American-backed radio stations took to the airwaves a few months later.

Lying in that hospital bed in Birmingham, England, Malala was truly a passive object of the news media—perhaps for the first time. But it didn't last long.

ON OCTOBER 10, 2013, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS RELEASED A piece about frontrunners for the Nobel Peace Prize, which was to be announced the following day. The first paragraph of the story described the problem with such predictions. "With no clues from the judges in Norway, speculation about the frontrunners for Friday's announcement is primarily based on the committee's previous choices and current events." In other words, there was no real way to know who was being considered seriously by the selection committee, let alone who the frontrunners were. Still, the article went on to list four favorites. Malala Yousafzai was the first nominee mentioned; she was the "bookmakers' favorite," the article noted.

In the year since she had been shot by a Taliban militant, Malala's story had reached epic proportions. It began brewing even before she had reached the hospital bed in Pakistan—her father had to turn off all the television sets in the waiting area that evening, because they were all reporting the news of the shooting and he couldn't bear to watch. The chief of the Pakistani army, who was aiding in the logistics of Malala's treatment, followed her progress from his office on TV screens, "one tuned to a local channel in Urdu and the other to Sky News in English," Malala writes. By the time

she reached the children's hospital in Birmingham, England, a few days later, "A Sky News helicopter was soon circling above, and as many as 250 journalists came to the hospital as far away as Australia and Japan."

Lying in that hospital bed, Malala was truly a passive object of the news media—perhaps for the first time. But it didn't last long. In March 2012, while she was still getting cochlear implants to regain hearing in her left ear that was destroyed by a bullet, *The Guardian* announced that Malala had signed a deal worth a "reported 2 million" pounds for her memoir. Christina Lamb, a journalist who had reported from Pakistan and other Asian and African countries, was chosen to be her co-author. The publication date was set for October 8, 2013, almost exactly a year after the assassination attempt and days before the announcement of the Nobel, for which Malala had already been nominated.

Between the book release, the anniversary of her shooting, other international awards, and the upcoming Nobel announcement, Malala was ubiquitous in the global media during the first week of October last year. She delivered an arresting performance on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. "We spoke up for our rights to every media channel, to every newspaper, that we could," she told Stewart. "And we did not know at that time that our small interview would have an impact or not, but it had." While Malala didn't ultimately win the peace prize, between the flurry of media speculation leading up to the Nobel announcement and her book publicity, *I Am Malala* jumped to number three on *The New York Times* Best Sellers list.

As the Americans embraced her, back in Pakistan, the news media that had first catapulted her into the world of global news began withdrawing its love for her, painting her as just another pawn in the war of words between Pakistan and the US. An article in the *Frontier Post*, the oldest and most respected English-language daily in Pakistan's north-west region, ran an article with the headline, "Malala: The New Dolly." Malala is an "unnaturally engineered character to be used for geopolitical experiments," it said. The Western media, in turn, pounced on the opportunity to cover the bad press Malala received in Pakistan. An article by Reuters explained the phenomenon simplistically: "In a nation thriving on conspiracy theories, some have even doubted the sincerity of her campaign."

In the midst of all this, many journalists and editors wrote confessionals about their relationship with Malala and the Yousafzais. Jon Williams, the BBC's world news editor, posted a piece that stated, "Neither she nor her father was paid" for her blogging. And it was her father who had "decided to disclose her real name," Williams noted. Christina Lamb, Malala's co-author, wrote a long feature for the *Sunday Times* headlined, "My Year With Malala." And the day before Malala's book appeared, *The New York Times* posted another online video produced by Adam Ellick, the reporter who had made the original documentary, along with an article in which Ellick answered "the five questions people often ask me" about Malala.

This new film was titled *The Making of Malala*, and it was reedited footage from Ellick's original work on Swat in 2009.

"This is a story of a young girl, her ambitious father, and the media and the role we all played in her rise and the tragedy that almost took her life," Ellick says in the introductory voiceover. The documentary focused on Malala's father, who in hindsight reminded Ellick "of a parent pushing their kid to become the next tennis star or beauty pageant winner." Ellick lamented the fact that he had not thought enough about Malala's safety at that time, but he ultimately laid the blame at her father's feet.

As the Americans embraced Malala, the Pakistani media began painting her as just another pawn in the war of words between Pakistan and the US.

"It was the only time in my career," Ellick wrote about his relationship with Ziauddin, "that a source was becoming increasingly interested in a story, while I was becoming increasingly tentative."

But the seduction was mutual and undeniable all along. The problem was not really an overbearing father or an overly enthusiastic press. In the end, Malala was shot because no one, not the Pakistani news media, not the reporters and editors in the American and international press, and not the Yousafzais, recognized how potent a weapon the media had become in the war in Pakistan. This lack of recognition—some might even call it denial—is something that puts all journalists, as well as their sources, in mortal danger every day in Pakistan.

Malala, in the end, appears to be the wisest. In the acknowledgements of her book, which is likely the only section over which she had complete control (Lamb had her own acknowledgements section), she thanks "everyone in Pakistan and all round the world" who prayed for her. She mentions more than two-dozen people and organizations by name. She thanks a motley crew of characters, from the bus driver who drove her to school to Angelina Jolie and Ban Ki Moon—even the chief of the Pakistani army. She thanks her nurse, Fiona Alexander, for handling the media so well. And while she does thank Lamb for "turning into reality what was just a dream," Malala mentions no other journalist. **CJR**

SHAHAN MUFTI teaches journalism at the University of Richmond. He is the author of *The Faithful Scribe: A Story of Islam, Pakistan, Family, and War*.

Almost famous

Can a star-studded documentary series make people care about climate change?

BY ALEXIS SOBEL FITTS

Olivia Munn slinked into the airy lounge of Seattle's Columbia Center as if she were trespassing on someone else's film set. In truth, the actress had agreed to the shoot—part of an ambitious new documentary about climate change—out of benevolence, and was running late. The crew had already installed lights around a corner window, selected for its view of the Space Needle, and settled into a shuffleboard game with Jigar Shah, the green-energy expert Munn was scheduled to interview. On *The Newsroom*, Munn oozes gravitas—her character, an economics reporter, is

known for her curt summaries of statistics. But in over-the-knee boots and a plaid sweater-coat, she appeared airbrushed, more starlet than newshound. "I apologize to everyone for the delay," she said. "I didn't get to sleep until 3am."

Joel Bach, one of the film's creators and executive producers, gave a nervous laugh. For months his production team had been briefing Munn on the story she was now expected to narrate. It would involve, of all things, coal. Specifically, a series of terminals slated to be built near Bellingham, WA, just over a hundred miles north of Seattle. It's a complicated, wonky story, and Munn is no coal expert. She had given the crew 36 hours of her time, during which she'd film while being brought up to speed on the coal debate, a process that began immediately with a summary of cap and trade.

Munn reacted to the concept with surprise. "It's like, I have to give you \$10,000, but I get to decide where it goes?"

Bach nodded.

"That's bullshit, Joel," she said. "Are you kidding me? I could say it goes to my charity, Olivia Munn, Incorporated. I call bullshit on that."

Invigorated by the exchange, Munn plopped herself across from Shah for a conversation about the economics of renewable energy. But unlike a normal interview, the revelations came mostly from the interrogator, offered in one-liners:

"Either way China's our dad, right? Cause we either sell them our coal or we sell them our jobs."

"Solar energy equals more jobs equals awesome."

Munn ended the interview by quipping that she and Shah should run for governor, suggesting a team name: Jigamunn. "Oh my gosh, this is a win," she cooed.

The sound guy looked flustered, but Bach seemed relieved. "She doesn't sound like a journalist at all," he said to no one in particular. "She's great."

THREE YEARS AGO, WHEN BACH AND DAVID GELBER, THE film's other co-creator and executive producer, left their jobs as producers at *60 Minutes* to launch a television documentary series dedicated to climate change, colleagues told them they were crazy. The last mainstream documentary anyone had made on the subject was 2007's *An Inconvenient Truth*. Al Gore's film launched global warming into the public sphere but spawned few imitators—even as reports on the consequences of climate change grew more pronounced. The films that did make it to market in the wake of Gore's effort failed to attract eyeballs outside of special-interest circles. And worse, most were boring.

But Bach and Gelber's idea was that celebrity charisma could make a topic like coal leap off the screen and demand attention on a national scale. Their project tackles the story of global warming by sending a roster of famous people sashaying around the globe, filming segments about climate refugees in Bangladesh and the political battle over deforestation in Indonesia. Shortly after they quit their day jobs, Bach and



Real enough? This scene from the film shows what Hurricane Sandy did in Union Beach, NJ.

Gelber had recruited an arsenal of A-list celebrities—names like Matt Damon, America Ferrera, Harrison Ford, and Jessica Alba—and convinced Jerry Weintraub and James Cameron to join as executive producers. The series, the first season of which airs on Showtime in April, even has an appropriately larger-than-life name: *Years of Living Dangerously*.

By dropping celebrities into the middle of real stories about climate change, Bach and Gelber think they can make a notoriously abstract topic emotional and exciting—a technique they extended to the aesthetics of filming. Traditionally, *60 Minutes* conducts interviews in hotel suites and offices, using b-roll of their subjects walking and talking to liven up the segments. *Years* thrusts its correspondents into the action—placing Michael C. Hall in a boat to survey floods and allowing Harrison Ford to pilot a helicopter through ransacked forests—and fills out scenes with point-of-view shots of them traveling between interviews, a feature-film technique that makes the stories appear less staged. And celebrities, unlike journalists, conduct interviews without the pretense of expertise that Bach thinks might turn off viewers. Before reporting a story on the West Texas drought, *House of Lies* star Don Cheadle warned producers that “he wasn’t an expert.” “We told him, ‘We don’t want you to be an expert. We just want you to be curious,’” Bach recalls.

Unlike the bare-bones budgets of most documentary films, *Years* has what amounts to a best-case scenario for

creating compelling journalism about climate change. Bach sees their strategy as a kind of bait-and-switch for viewers: “Hopefully they’ll turn on the TV and see Matt Damon talking to some guy and they’ll be like, ‘What is this movie?’ And then they’ll realize it’s not a movie pretty quickly but they’ll stick around and watch.”

Making their stories visually compelling is “important,” he added. “Especially when you’re dealing with a topic like this that’s depressing as shit.”

YEARS WAS CONCEIVED OVER A SERIES OF LUNCHEES AT A Greek diner in Hell’s Kitchen, around the corner from the *60 Minutes* offices. Though Gelber had been at *60 Minutes* nearly two decades by the time Bach arrived in 2004, establishing a solid reputation as Ed Bradley’s producer, the two enjoyed working together. Bach and Gelber, who calls Bach “his other wife,” were so often seen as a duo that colleagues developed a nickname for the pair: Gelbach. At 72, Gelber, whose face is all angles with a perpetually furrowed brow, is an odd fit with the 44-year-old Bach’s playful, boyish vibe. It is as if an Aaron Sorkin character picked up a surfer sidekick.

Shortly after starting at *60 Minutes*, Bach became interested in covering stories about climate change. He grew up in Colorado, where he had watched the snow dwindle each year on the mountains by his childhood home. “I didn’t

think about it then, but you could see the climate warming," he said. Bach began producing as many climate segments as the newsmagazine would approve. Gelber finally understood the urgency of Bach's obsession when they produced their first climate-change segment together, on wildfires. "I grew up as a Jew in the shadow of the Holocaust," said Gelber. "I'm always thinking about what journalists knew and didn't cover."

The timing was in their favor. After 25 years at *60 Minutes*, Gelber was looking for a big second act; Bach wanted to focus on telling the story of global warming. Initially they planned to fictionalize a segment they'd produced on Duke Energy CEO Jim Rogers into a feature film. ("We saw it as man torn between fiduciary responsibilities and ethics," said Gelber.) Bach "took a whack" at a screenplay during their summer leave, but floundered. The idea blossomed into a theatrical documentary, "a follow-up to Gore's film," said Bach. But getting attention for a documentary would be difficult without help from Hollywood. Both men understood that it was the involvement of Lawrence Bender, the producer of most of Quentin Tarantino's movies, that got *An Inconvenient Truth* made.

Bach called Jerry Weintraub's niece, a college friend, who maneuvered their pitch onto her uncle's desk. Two weeks later the phone rang; it was Weintraub asking for a meeting. Bach and Gelber flew to his home in Palm Springs and spent a weekend drinking martinis and talking mostly about things other than their documentary project. Just before their plane back to New York took off, Weintraub signed on as an executive producer, with a single piece of advice. "He told us, 'What are you guys, idiots?'" recalls Bach. "No one watches theatrical documentary. You want eyeballs, you do television."

With Weintraub's name, raising money proved easier than Gelber or Bach had anticipated. They set a fundraising goal of \$15 million. Their first million came quickly, from the commercial realtor Rena Shulsky David and the investor Jeremy Grantham. Another lucky break landed them a meeting with James Cameron, who as it happened had been looking to put his weight behind a piece of climate-change journalism. Over breakfast in Malibu, Cameron agreed to be an executive producer under the condition that the project increase the size of its Web and social-media campaign. In other words, it couldn't just be a piece of journalism; it had to aim to influence national policy.

Bach returned from Los Angeles elated. "I said to my wife: 'We have Jerry Weintraub, James Cameron, and a million bucks—can I quit my job now?'" They left *60 Minutes* in April 2011.

THOUGH THE EVENTUAL EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ARE dramatic—nothing less than the fate of the world and all its inhabitants—it does not translate easily to storytelling. Narrative is elusive because most causes of climate change, in the form of carbon emissions, are invisible, as are the slowly accumulating consequences. Understanding the severity of global warming requires peeking into the future, though scientific studies and predictive modeling. But the science

of climate change is a complicated, interdisciplinary mix not often credited with tugging on heartstrings. "It's fundamentally a problem that has been described in a foreign language," explained Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication. "I mean, *radiative forcings*, what is that?"

It also works contrary to how humans experience fear, which kicks in most viscerally for immediate threats. Climate change, with consequences that are distant, lacks the clear villain that stories about, say, terrorism hinge on. "You almost couldn't design a problem that is a worse fit with our underlying psychology," said Leiserowitz. Traditionally, journalists have grounded the climate beat by reporting on its effects—melting icebergs and extreme weather events, like heat waves—though they are only tangentially connected to climate change. Probability modeling shows that climate change makes extreme weather events increasingly likely, but it doesn't allow scientists to link any individual event to global warming—and what compelling nut graf has ever relied on probability?

According to tracking from the University of Colorado's Center for Science and Technology Policy Research, news coverage of climate change has dropped steadily since 2009, and that coverage is largely limited to special-interest reporting: the science-and-environment ghetto.

Gelber told me he often wonders how to get the public to take action, "not just polar bear-ize" the issue. But massive change doesn't come without a movement, which, so far, climate change has failed to inspire. "If only I could get the media to care half as much about global warming as twerking," he told me, his voice trailing off.

Gelber likes to tell an anecdote about the first time he used a celebrity to draw interest to a subject, on a *60 Minutes* segment in 1988. The Natural Resources Defense Council had pitched Gelber a complicated story about a chemical used to grow apples. He didn't think the network would go for a dry story, until the NRDC offered Meryl Streep as a spokeswoman. He filmed the segment with Streep, who was "stunning—you just have to look at this woman," Gelber said. He screened the piece for Don Hewitt, who loved it, with a caveat. "He just said, 'What the fuck is she doing in the story?'" said Gelber. "I had the great honor of being the only producer in history to leave Meryl Streep on the cutting-room floor." When I point out the irony of the similarity between his current project and this failed project, Gelber notes a difference: "Meryl wasn't the correspondent, she was the expert."

Years uses celebrities differently, as proxies for the viewer—they're educated about climate change along with the audience. Shows like *Vice*, which airs on HBO, have built a brand out of choosing correspondents with public appeal rather than subject-matter expertise. As have other climate-change documentaries, like the Leonardo DiCaprio-narrated film, *The 11th Hour*, which, despite its splashy headliner, received critical acclaim but a middling audience. Unlike DiCaprio, who acted as a climate-change expert in the film—at one point professing, literally, from a mountaintop—Olivia Munn's growing knowledge on the subject in theory makes her more relatable, a hidden journalist for a generation wary



Indy! Harrison Ford on the climate-change case.

of reporters. But inserting celebrities into *Years* also fundamentally changes the mechanism of storytelling. When Ian Somerhalder, the actor from *The Vampire Diaries*, shot a scene at a North Carolina coal rally, half the picketers were young girls who'd shown up to see the tween star. Indonesia's forestry minister told the press that Harrison Ford should be deported, after a particularly challenging interview where the actor went at him "tougher than any journalist would've had the nerve to," said Solly Granatstein, the co-executive producer who filmed the shoot.

The hope is that the celebrities on *Years* will make the subject of climate change more interesting by their interest in it, so the producers have made a habit of courting celebrities whose fan bases might not otherwise watch a film on global warming. ("Do you know who Ian Somerhalder is?" Gelber asked me over lunch. "He's very popular with young people." When I shook my head no, he looked crushed.) Gelber believes that applying the *60 Minutes* model of storytelling—compelling characters with uncertain outcomes—is enough to make the subject take root. He also believes covering it is an ethical imperative, comparing the situation to Peter Jennings' insistence on covering Bosnia at CBS, though the story placed low on viewer surveys. "If there's a genocide happening in the world, how can you not cover it?" Gelber said. "It's a self-fulfilling assumption; if you don't tell the story, you signal that it's unimportant. I've always felt that climate change is where the civil rights movement was in 1957. We're really just starting to pick up steam."

But there are limits to the reach of any one film. Seventeen percent of the American public saw *An Inconvenient Truth*, mostly high-income liberals, which Yale's Anthony Leiserowitz called "stunning for a documentary." Still, that means 83 percent of the population didn't see the movie. Leiserowitz said the most influential movie about climate change is the 2004 doomsday thriller, *The Day After Tomorrow*. "The movie took some artistic license with the science, but the public reaction was gigantic compared to *An Inconvenient Truth*," he said. According to surveys after the film, "the 30 million people who saw it were overwhelmingly influenced; they were convinced that climate change was happening and that humans were causing it."

When I asked Leiserowitz if he thought *Years* could influence public perception of climate change, he was skeptical. "It will play an important role in that if it's told well and told accurately it will reach the people it reaches," he said. "But that's certainly not going to be the majority of the American public. It's gotta be the right movie, told really well, at the right moment when the culture is ready to hear it. *An Inconvenient Truth* just got really lucky."

IN LATE SEPTEMBER, 100 PEOPLE GATHERED at Thalassa, a lavish Indian restaurant in Manhattan, where Gelber was scheduled to screen a rough cut from the documentary during a dinner hosted by the Environmental Defense Fund, whose board had provided

some of the documentary's funders. The night before, Gelber had been up late tinkering with the segment he was scheduled to screen, but mingling over baklava and bite-sized brownies he was avuncular and pleasantly self-deprecating. "I haven't worn a tie since my bar mitzvah," he joked to a group of Climate Corps fellows who were profiled in the segment, "I think it's the same one." He told the joke four more times throughout the evening.

While attendees pattered around dessert, Gelber screened his trailer. There was a round of applause, punctuated by whispers of approval. "Why isn't this on HBO?" muttered Nick Nicholas, the former chairman of HBO.

When Gelber asked for questions, Nicholas had one. "David, on Showtime, you get maybe 15 million households—so 90 percent of the households in the US do not have access to Showtime. You're a CBS veteran; they have access to all of the households. Do you have the right to take this national?"

Gelber launched into his elevator pitch: Showtime had agreed to stream the first two episodes of the series to non-subscribers, and regardless, having names like Matt Damon, Jessica Alba, and Harrison Ford tweeting about the project would broaden its reach. *Vanity Fair*, Gelber said, would be profiling the film. "More people will know this is being taken seriously than will see the series," he said.

Gelber moved on to other questions, but when I asked Nicholas what he thought of the response, he shrugged. "He didn't answer my question," he said.

"Showtime has 15 million subscribers, but they're not going to get all 15 million," Nicholas continued. "If they get 5 to 10 percent of that, that's amazing, and that's two million. That's the nature of the issue: It's hard. People watch Showtime for movies and to be entertained. They're not looking to be educated. *Vanity Fair* is great, but it's something that's read east of the Mississippi by about four people. I read it and I love it, but I'm the choir. We have this huge problem where a huge percentage of the population doesn't even believe climate change is happening. It's too overwhelming, it's too big, and people don't know what to do." He paused for a moment. "We'll see if it works," he said. "I hope it does. Something has to." **CJR**

ALEXIS SOBEL FITTS is an assistant editor at *CJR*.

The great story

In the run-up to the Great Recession, accountability journalism
saw the story that access journalism missed

BY DEAN STARKMAN

"I have made no criticism in this book which is not the shoptalk of reporters and editors. But only rarely do newspapermen take the public into their confidence. They will have to sooner or later. It is not enough for them to struggle against great odds, as many of them are doing, wearing out their souls to do a particular assignment well. The philosophy of the work itself needs to be discussed; the news about the news needs to be told."

—Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News*, 1920

The US business press failed to investigate and hold accountable Wall Street banks and major mortgage lenders in the years leading up to the financial crisis of 2008. That's why the crisis came as such a shock to the public and to the press itself. ¶ And that's the news about the news. ¶ The watchdog didn't bark. What happened? How could an entire journalism subculture, understood to be sophisticated and plugged in, miss the central story occurring on its beat? And why was it that some journalists, mostly outside the mainstream, were able to produce work that in fact did reflect the radical

changes overtaking the financial system while the vast majority in the mainstream did not?

This book is about journalism watchdogs and what happens when they don't bark. What happens is the public is left in the dark about, and powerless against, complex problems that overtake important national institutions. Few need reminders, even today, of the costs of the crisis: 10 million Americans uprooted by foreclosure with even more still threatened, 23 million unemployed or underemployed, whole communities set back a generation, shocking bailouts for the perpetrators, political polarization here and instability abroad. And so on and so forth.

This is an excerpt from *The Watchdog That Didn't Bark: The Financial Crisis and the Disappearance of Investigative Journalism*, published this month by Columbia University Press. It has been edited for space and to conform to CJR editorial style.

Was the brewing crisis really such a secret? Was it all so complex as to be beyond the capacity of conventional journalism and, through it, the public, to understand? Was it all so hidden? In fact, the answer to all those questions is "no." The problem—distorted incentives corrupting the financial industry—was plain, but not to Wall Street executives, traders, rating agencies, analysts, quants, or other financial insiders. It was plain to the outsiders: state regulators, plaintiffs' lawyers, community groups, defrauded mortgage borrowers, and, mostly, to former employees of financial institutions, the whistleblowers, who were, in fact, blowing the whistle. A few reporters actually talked to them, understood the metastasizing problem, and wrote about it. Unfortunately, they didn't work for the mainstream business press.

In the aftermath of the Lehman bankruptcy of September 2008, a great fight broke out over the causes of the



Den of thieves It was no secret that institutionalized corruption had taken wing on Wall Street.

crisis—a fight that’s more or less resolved at this point. While of course it’s complicated, Wall Street and the mortgage lenders stand front and center in the dock. Meanwhile, a smaller fight broke out over the business press’ role. After all, its central beat—the one over which it claims particular mastery—is the same one that suddenly melted down, to the shock of one and all. For business reporters, the crisis was more than a surprise. There was even something uncanny about it. A generation of professionals had, in effect, grown up with this set of Wall Street firms and had put them on the covers of *Fortune* and *Forbes*, the front page of *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, and the rest, scores of times. The firms were so familiar, the press had even given them anthropomorphized personalities over the years: Morgan Stanley, the white-shoe WASP firm; Merrill Lynch, the scrappy Irish-Catholic firm, often considered the dumb one; Goldman, the elite Jewish firm; Lehman, the scrappy Jewish firm; Bear Stearns, the naughty one, etc. Love them or hate them, there they were, blessed by accounting firms, rating agencies, and regulators, gleaming towers of power. Until one day, they weren’t.

Critics contended, understandably, that the business press must have been asleep at the wheel. In a March 2009 interview that would go viral, the comedian Jon Stewart confronted the CNBC personality Jim Cramer with the

problem. Stewart said, in effect, that business journalism presents itself as providing wall-to-wall, 24/7 coverage of Wall Street but had somehow managed to miss the most important thing ever to happen on that beat—the Big One. “It is a game that you know is going on, but you go on television as a financial network and pretend it isn’t happening,” is how Stewart framed it. And many understood exactly what he meant.

Top business-news professionals—also understandably, perhaps—have defended their industry’s pre-crisis performance. In speeches and interviews, these professionals assert that the press in fact did provide clear warnings and presented examples of pre-crisis stories that told about brewing problems in the lending system before the crash. Some have gone further and asserted that it was the public itself that had failed—failed to respond to the timely information the press had been providing all along. “Anybody who’s been paying attention has seen business journalists waving the red flag for several years,” wrote Chris Roush, in an article entitled “Unheeded Warnings,” which articulated the professionals’ view at length. Diana Henriques, a respected *New York Times* business and investigative reporter, defended her profession in a speech in November 2008: “The government, the financial industry and the American consumer—if they had only paid attention—would

have gotten ample warning about this crisis from us, years in advance, when there was still time to evacuate and seek shelter from this storm." There were many such pronouncements. Then the press moved on.

It is only fair to point out that, beyond speeches and assertions, the business press has not published a major story on its own peculiar role in the financial system before the crisis. It has, meanwhile, investigated and taken to task

The business press had done everything but take on the institutions that brought down the financial system.

virtually every other possible agent in the crisis: Wall Street banks, mortgage lenders, the Federal Reserve, the Securities and Exchange Commission, Fannie Mae, Freddy Mac, the Office of Thrift Supervision, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, compensation consultants, and so on. This kind of forensic work is entirely appropriate. But what about the watchdog?

In the spring of 2009, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, where I work as an editor, undertook a project with a simple goal: to assess whether the business press, as it contended, did indeed provide the public with adequate warning of looming dangers when it could have made a difference. The idea was to perform a fair reading of the record of institutional business reporting before the crash. We created a commonsense list of nine major business news outlets (*The Wall Street Journal*, *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Businessweek*, the *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg*, *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Washington Post*) and used news databases to search for stories that could plausibly be considered warnings about the heart of the problem: abusive mortgage lenders and their funders on Wall Street. We then asked the news outlets to volunteer their best work during this period, and, to their credit, nearly all of them cooperated.

The result was "Power Problem," published in the spring of 2009. Its conclusion was simple: The business press had done everything but take on the institutions that brought down the financial system. The record shows that the press published its hardest-hitting investigations of lenders and Wall Street between 2000 and 2003, even if there were only a few of them. Then, for reasons I will attempt to explain, it lapsed into useful but not sufficient consumer- and investor-oriented stories during the critical years of 2004 through 2006. Missing are investigative stories that directly confront powerful institutions about basic business practices while those institutions were still powerful. The watchdog didn't bark.

To read various journalistic accounts of mortgage lending and Wall Street during the bubble is to come away with radically differing representations of the soundness of the US financial system. It all depended on what you were reading. Anyone "paying attention" to the conventional business press could be forgiven for thinking that things were, in the end, basically normal. Yes, there was a housing bubble. Any fair reading of the press of the era makes that clear, even if warnings were mitigated by just-as-loud celebrations of the boom. And yes, the press said there were a lot of terrible mortgage products out there. Those are important consumer and investor issues. But that's all they are. When the gaze turned to financial institutions, the message was entirely different: all clear. It's not just the puff pieces ("Washington Mutual Is Using a Creative Retail Approach to Turn the Banking World Upside Down"; "Citi's chief hasn't just stepped out of Sandy Weill's shadow—he's stepped out of his own as he strives to make himself into a leader with vision"; etc.) or the language that sometimes lapses into toadying ("Some of its old-world gentility remains: Goldman agreed to talk for this story only reluctantly, wary of looking like a braggart"; "His 6-foot-4 linebacker-esque frame is economically packed into a club chair in his palatial yet understated office"). It's that even stories that were ostensibly critical of individual Wall Street firms and mortgage lenders described them in terms of their competition with one another: Would their earnings be okay? There was a bubble all right, and the business press was in it.

Trouble was, the system it was covering was going to hell in a hand basket. Institutionalized corruption, fueled by perverse compensation incentives, had taken wing. The sub-priming of American finance—the spread of a once-marginal, notorious industry to the heart of the financial system—was well underway. If this had been a big secret, that would be one thing, but if that were true, how was it that *Forbes*, of all magazines, could write a scathing exposé of Household Finance, then a subprime giant, under the headline "Home Wrecker" in 2002, but not follow it up with a similar piece until it was too late? How could *The Wall Street Journal* publish stories like the brilliant "Best Interests: How Big Lenders Sell a Pricier Refinancing to Poor Homeowners ..." around the same time, on its prestigious front page, then nothing of the sort later, when the situation got much, much worse? Meanwhile, still in 2003, a reporter named Michael Hudson was writing this:

A seven-month investigation by *Southern Exposure* has uncovered a pattern of predatory practices within Citi's subprime units. *Southern Exposure* interviewed more than 150 people—borrowers, attorneys, activists, current and ex-employees—and reviewed thousands of pages of loan contracts, lawsuits, testimony, and company reports. The people and the documents provide strong evidence that Citi's subprime operations are reaping billions in ill-gotten gains by targeting the consumers who can least afford it.

Who is Michael Hudson? And what on earth is *Southern Exposure*? For that matter, why was an urban affairs reporter

for an alternative weekly in Pittsburgh, with no financial reporting experience, able to write this (emphasis added):

By its very nature, the mortgage-backed securities market encourages lenders to make as many loans at as high an interest rate as possible. That may seem a prescription for frenzied and irresponsible lending. But federal regulation, strict guidelines by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, intense and straightforward competition between banks, and the relative sophistication of bank borrowers have kept things from getting out hand, according to the HUD/Treasury reporter. Those brakes don't apply as well in the subprime lending market, where regulation is looser, marketing more freewheeling and customers less savvy.

The date? 2004. One type of journalism told one kind of story; another presented an entirely different reality. What accounts for these dramatically opposed representations? And why was the conventional business press perfectly capable of performing both kinds of journalism when the problems were small but incapable of providing the valuable, powerful kind later, when it counted?

Walter Lippmann is as right today as he was in 1920. It's not enough for reporters and editors to struggle against great odds as many of them have been doing. It's time to take the public into our confidence. The news about the news needs to be told. It needs to be told because, in the run-up to the global financial crisis, the professional press let the public down.

It needs to be told because the mortgage crisis and its aftermath have coincided with a crisis in the news business. Google and a new vanguard of internet companies have wreaked havoc on traditional news-media business models, siphoning away a huge chunk of the advertising revenue that had long sustained American journalism. Once-great newsrooms have been devastated and thousands of former print reporters are out on the street or in PR. Their former colleagues now operate in a harrowing and harried new environment of financial distress and sped-up productivity requirements. Meanwhile, a new digital journalism ecosystem has bloomed with new publications, models, forms, practices, idioms, tools, and institutions.

Another fierce argument is underway about the future of news—about who will do it, what it will look like, and who—or what—is this “public” that journalism is supposed to be speaking to. As in all times of crisis, the consultants, marketers, and opportunists of various stripes—never far from journalism—step forward to proclaim that they know what the future holds. But no one really knows. The only thing we can be sure of in journalism is that everything is in question, everything on the table: business models, forms, roles, practices, values. Will news organizations survive? Can amateur networks help? Is storytelling out of date? Is statistical analysis—known as Big Data—the next breakthrough? That the new digital era has not lived up to its promise is no reason to dismiss it.

So we stand at a moment when established journalism can be fairly said to have failed in a basic function, and, as usual, the future is uncertain. And the present, well, it's a bit of a mess. Is there no hope?

Actually, there is. One form of journalism has proven itself an effective advocate for the public interest, a true watchdog, and proven itself at least since the great Ida Tarbell in the early 20th century. It's neither alternative nor mainstream. It's not necessarily professional or amateur. It's neither inherently analogue nor digital. It's a practice.

The practice has never really had a good name. Sometimes it's called “accountability reporting.” Sometimes it's called “investigative reporting.” Sometimes it's called “public-service reporting” or “public-interest reporting.” Sometimes it's called something else. We'll go with “accountability reporting.” Accountability reporting is a journalism term of art—the shoptalk of reporters and editors, as Lippmann would put it. But it's one the public would do well to better understand.

Accountability reporting sounds like something everyone would be for, but that's actually not the case. It only arrived as a mainstream, professionalized practice in the 1960s and has had to fight for its existence within news organizations ever since. Confrontational and accusatory, it provokes the enmity of the rich and powerful as a matter of course. When Theodore Roosevelt dubbed it “muckraking” in 1906, he didn't mean it as a compliment. Risky, stressful, expensive, and difficult, it perennially faces resistance within news organizations and tries the patience of bureaucrats, bean counters, and hacks. News corporatists, such as the late USA Today founder Al Neuharth and mogul Rupert Murdoch, deride public-service reporting—or anything that resembles it—as a form of elitism, an affectation of prize-mongering and self-important reporters, journalists writing for “other journalists,” as one Murdoch biographer puts it. Withholding resources for public-interest reporting, as we'll see, is invariably couched as opposition to “long” and “pretentious” stories foisted on the public by “elitist” reporters. But opposing long and ambitious stories is like fully supporting apple pie but opposing flour, butter, sugar, and pie tins. In the end, there is no pie.

In our digital age, impatience with accountability reporting is, if anything, more pronounced. The economics and technological architecture of online news militate against accountability reporting. As a result, digital-news advocates, too, tend to ignore it or dismiss it altogether. “The whole notion of ‘long-form’ journalism is writer-centered, not public-centered,” as Jeff Jarvis, a prominent digital-news thinker, tweeted. Yet accountability reporting is a core function of American journalism. It is what makes it distinctive, what makes it powerful when it is independent. It is the great agenda setter, public-trust builder, and value creator. It is the practice that explains complex problems to a mass audience and holds the powerful to account. It is the point.

Now is a good time to consider what journalism the public needs. What actually works? Who are journalism's true forefathers and foremothers? Is there a line of authority in journalism's collective past that can help us navigate its future? What creates value, both in a material sense and in terms of what is good and valuable in American journalism?

Accountability reporting comes in many forms—a series of revelations in a newspaper or online, a book, a TV magazine segment—but its most common manifestation has been the long-form newspaper or magazine story, the focus of this book. Call it the Great Story. The form was pioneered by the muckrakers' quasi-literary work in the early 20th century, with Tarbell's exposé on the Standard Oil monopoly in *McClure's* magazine a brilliant example. As we'll see, the Great Story has demonstrated its subversive power countless times and has exposed and clarified complex problems for mass audiences across a nearly limitless range of subjects: graft in American cities, modern slave labor in the US, the human costs of leveraged buyouts, police brutality and corruption, the secret recipients on Wall Street of government bailouts, the crimes and cover-ups of media and political elites, and on and on, year in and year out. The greatest of muckraking editors, Samuel S. McClure, would say to his staff, over and over, almost as a mantra, "The story is the thing!" And he was right.

"Access reporting," the practice of obtaining inside information from powerful people and institutions, is the longstanding rival of accountability reporting. They are American journalism's two main tendencies, and the tension between the two can be said to define the field. The access and accountability schools represent radically different understandings of what journalism is and whom it should serve. The two practices produce entirely different representations of reality, and this difference proved critical in the run-up to the crash. Access reporting emphasizes gaining inside information from the actions or intentions of powerful actors before they are widely known. Its stock-in-trade is the scoop, or exclusive. In business news, the prototypical access story is the mergers-and-acquisitions scoop. Accountability reporting, in contrast, seeks to gather information not from but about powerful actors. The typical accountability story is the long-form exposé.

I usually keep in mind proxies for the two schools: Gretchen Morgenson, the great investigative reporter and editor for *The New York Times*, and Andrew Ross Sorkin, who runs Dealbook, a thriving unit of the same paper that focuses on inside scoops about business mergers and acquisitions. Morgenson was the first to reveal—in the face of furious opposition from Goldman Sachs, among others—the beneficiaries of the bailout of the American International Group, namely Goldman Sachs and other Wall Street banks. Sorkin's monumental crisis book, *Too Big to Fail*, lionized Wall Street figures for their (failed) efforts to avert a catastrophe their own institutions had caused. That the two leading representatives of the two journalism poles work for the same newspaper only emphasizes the degree to which journalism must balance both tendencies.

One way to think about the difference is that access reporting tells readers what powerful actors say while accountability reporting tells readers what they do. Access reporting tends to talk to elites; accountability, to dissidents. Access writes about specialized topics for a niche audience. Accountability writes about general topics for a mass audience. The differences are so stark that they can be distilled into a list:

ACCESS	ACCOUNTABILITY
Fast	Slow
Short	Long
Elite sources	Dissident sources
Orthodox views	Heterodox views
Top-down	Bottom-up
Quantity	Quality
Investor	Public
Niche	Mass
Management friendly	Management unfriendly
Inverted pyramid	Storytelling
Functionalistic	Moralistic

Access tends to transmit orthodox views; accountability tends to transmit heterodox views. In business news, access reporting focuses on investor interests; accountability, on the public interest.

Access and accountability, then, are journalism's Jacob and Esau, Gog and Magog, forever in conflict over resources, status, and influence. But it's hardly a fair fight. Access reporting is journalism's bread and butter. Its stories are quicker to produce and rarely confrontational, making them more compatible with news-productivity needs. Accountability reporting, meanwhile, is forever marginal, a cost center, burdened with stories that are time consuming and enemy making. But of the two strains, only one speaks to, and for, the broader public.

I come to this debate from a 30-year career as a journalist, 10 of those as an investigative reporter, 10 as a business reporter. I've done both access and accountability reporting and understand the necessity of both. The problem for journalism and the public, however, is that accountability reporting is at once the most vital and, at the same time, the most vulnerable. The difference between the two is the difference between probing Citigroup in 2003 and profiling it in 2006. Put simply, accountability reporting got the story that access reporting missed.

This book will trace the development of the watchdog from its roots in muckraking and its struggle to win a place in the mainstream media. In a sense, I hope to write the story of the Great Story. The reasons for this historical approach are threefold: to demonstrate that accountability reporting is indeed a potent weapon on the public's behalf; to show why its absence was so harmful during the mortgage era; and to secure its future in whatever journalism emerges from the digital disruption—because without accountability reporting, journalism has no purpose, no center, no point.

The first goal is especially important in order to rebut what I regard as facile criticisms, from both the political right and left and the digital-news advocates, that tend to dismiss all "mainstream media" as either hopelessly biased (as the right contends), uselessly timid (as the left has it), or just generally lame (as new-media enthusiasts believe). All three critiques may have some merit. Much of the old MSM indeed should be left by the wayside. But accountability reporting should always be understood as the core practice that defines and distinguishes American journalism. **CJR**

DEAN STARKMAN is *CJR's* Kingsford Capital Fellow and the editor of *The Audit*, a critique of business and economic coverage on *CJR.org*.

Remaking history

A rare trove of Victorian-era *Times-Picayunes* survived Nazi bombs and trans-Atlantic voyages, before landing in the lap of a Crescent City character with a passion for antique printing presses and big plans for his treasure

BY MICHAEL PATRICK WELCH

Joseph Makkos lives in a modest, second-floor studio in a light-industrial area of New Orleans' Ninth Ward, where his living space competes with his passion for printing. His bed is stuffed in a nook beside three different turn-of-the-century printing presses, and the floor is cluttered with drawers and buckets full of small letters and numbers made of lead. In the studio's center leans a tall wall of clear plastic tubes, each containing original, Victorian-era copies of New Orleans' daily newspaper, known since 1915 as the *Times-Picayune*. In a vast warehouse

space below Makkos' room, hundreds of tube-filled cardboard boxes await unpacking.

Makkos estimates that he has 30,000 sections of the *Picayune*, covering 1888 to 1929—an especially important period in the paper's history and the history of news technology in general. "I just found it while trolling Craigslist," says Makkos. "An ad in the 'free' section that said 'historic newspaper collection.' It had pictures of the giant stacks in a storefront, and some images of the tubes."

The papers' previous owners have included Pennsylvania newspaper dealer Timothy Hughes, who won them in a 1999 British Library auction in which he outbid author Nicholson Baker, as detailed in Baker's book *Double Fold*, an indictment of the routine destruction of old newspaper archives and books by libraries. Makkos learned almost everything he knows about his own collection from *Double Fold* and hopes his work will serve as a sort of coda to it. The book claims that, while part of the British Library's collection, Makkos' *Picayunes* survived an attack by Nazi pilots who bombed the library, mistaking it for munitions storage or a warplane factory. More than 10,000 editions of Irish and English papers were destroyed. The surviving papers were housed in the British Library and Museum in northern London until Hughes bought them, later selling them to an anonymous buyer who, remaining anonymous via a property manager, finally gave them to Makkos.

With the collection overflowing his studio, Makkos brushes against history with every step. He unsheathes an

edition from April 6, 1914, bearing mastheads from both the *Daily Picayune* and the *Times-Democrat* simultaneously—a style worn only briefly, right after the papers merged that same year. The paper's masthead changes three times within Makkos' collection, starting out as the *Daily Picayune*, then merging with the *Times-Democrat*, before officially becoming the *Times-Picayune*, a name that will celebrate its centennial in 2015.

He hands me another tube dated April 6, 1914, which features a political cartoon referencing New Orleans' discontent at being passed over for a Federal Reserve branch "even though the city hosts a US Mint. That was a big political issue," Makkos says. He grabs another random paper: January 23, 1901, the Victorian era meets the beginning of its end with the headline, "Queen Victoria is Dead." Another, from early July 1929: "The paper from the day before, July 3, includes the announcement telling the New Orleans transit workers that, 'Work must resume!'" Makkos chuckles because the next day's headline, July 4, reads, "Car Man Shot as 1000 People Battle in the Canal St Bus Barns." Makkos believes that particular paper documents the exact origination of New Orleans' traditional po'boy: "During the strike," Makkos says, "the owners of Mothers restaurant on Willow, around where the riot was, gave out sandwiches to the striking workers, like, 'Give that poor boy a sandwich.'"

Makkos plans to preserve all this history and, in some cases, bring it back to life, using his hand presses—of the



Big Job Joseph Makkos sits amid a mountain of historically important newspapers.

same vintage as those used to originally print the papers—to create photo replicas, broadsides, chapbooks, and other literary art objects based on his collection of *Picayunes*. But first he wants to organize and archive the massive collection. This could take years. He has started sorting a trail of tubes across his futon that represent Mardi Gras coverage; another wall is stacked with Victorian-era cartoons, political and otherwise; beside that leans a tower of Sunday magazines bearing the British Library's red cancellation stamp. Makkos says that many of these bound editions from the British Library were probably complete and intact.

But he is perturbed that, outside of what's in his room, these papers now exist only on the same type of microfilm he used to browse in his elementary school library. The paper's official microfilm archives were likely created from newspapers still in their bindings, which hindered the scanning process, according to Nicholson Baker's book. Once Makkos determines the best technology, he will begin archiving the collection to create what may well be the clearest, most complete record of historic *Picayunes*.

BEFORE HE ACQUIRED THE PAPERS, MAKKOS HAD ALREADY been an admirer of Eliza Jane Poitevent Holbrook Nicholson, a poet and businesswoman at the forefront of Victorian journalism. Growing up in Mississippi, she'd published pastoral, earthy poetry in the *Picayune* under the

pen name Pearl Rivers. A member of the first wave of female journalists storming the newsrooms, according to KnowLA, an online encyclopedia of Louisiana history and culture, she became literary editor of the *Daily Picayune* in 1870. Within two years she married the *Picayune's* much older owner, Colonel Alva Holbrook, who died four years later, in 1876, making his widow the first female publisher of a daily metropolitan newspaper in the country.

At that time, the paper was in debt and underperforming financially, but *Picayune* business manager George Nicholson purchased a portion of the company as a show of support for his young, trailblazing boss. In a further show of support, he then married her. Eliza Jane Nicholson's content innovations and George Nicholson's business skills made the *Picayune* into a powerful ship that the couple expertly navigated through the end of Reconstruction, the yellow fever outbreak, and the 1893 Cheniere Caminada hurricane, as Lamar W. Bridges recounts in the journal *Louisiana History*. Makkos' archive picks up about 10 years into their marriage, and he has taken to calling it "The Eliza Jane Nicholson Collection."

Nicholson, realizing that women were an underserved audience, broadened her editorial tradition of offering poetry, and literary and romantic stories. She expanded the *Picayune* from one eight-page section focusing mostly on power and money, giving it a second, more female-oriented



section just as suffrage began to bloom. Her new "Section 2" included book reviews, articles about animals, columns about health, and a women's advice column by Dorothy Dix. Nicholson published the first weekly issue of a serial novel called *A Dead Life*, and Makkos reaches into his pile to show me a syndicated Sherlock Holmes story from 1905. "That wouldn't have happened without Eliza Jane," he says.

"The back of the second section was a children's page," Makkos says, showing me the copy. "So the family are all reading the paper together, and dad hands mom her section, then mom tears the back off and throws it to the kids." The new section's front page typically featured Nicholson's most notable editorial innovation: Society Bee, a local column she wrote, sans byline, covering Mardi Gras krewe and other high-end society news. "That idea was first rejected by the Uptown crowd, because they felt it would be invasive," Makkos says. "But Eliza Jane won them over, and the column became a big deal, like, 'We're celebrities now because our names, and even our photographs, are in the paper.'" The paper went on to add a sports page, a magazine, and more prominent visuals, transitioning from illustrations into the age of photography. The earliest photo Makkos has found so far dates to 1900, four years after Nicholson's death and some 20 years after the New York and Chicago papers had started running photography. Somewhere among all his tubes is the first photograph ever published in the *Picayune*.

For now, he obsesses about oversized, sepia-toned portraits of New Orleans judges encircled in typographic illustrations and crooked, flowery borders. He giggles, showing me examples of rudimentary hand-drawn borders "tipped in" atop photos. He stares down at the paper, admiring the ways in which the technologies mesh. Makkos aims to similarly mesh new digital technology with his turn-of-the-century printing presses to document and recreate aspects of the Eliza Jane Nicholson Collection. "I am a purist," he says, "but there's no reason not to combine every technology available."

That includes technology that Eliza Jane would have recognized. Makkos has been interested and immersed in antiques since childhood. The son of an antique dealer in Cleveland, OH, he grew up watching his father junk, pick, salvage, and restore antique lamps and furniture. Makkos eventually developed his own vintage fetish, for antique printing presses.

In quiet, post-Katrina days, walking through the hibernating Frenchmen Street music district, Makkos would stop outside one big window covered in brown-bag paper, cut with a small, solitary-confinement-size peephole. "You could peer in and see work-desks and file cabinets, a light and a doorway, and a sign that said 'A.F. Laborde's Printers,'" he tells me. Laborde's had operated on Frenchmen in different forms since before the turn of the 19th century. "Then everyone had just gotten up from their desks and left the Friday before Katrina," says Makkos. "Andre Laborde

Innovator The Eliza Jane Nicholson Collection's women's fashion section (top, 1914), Sunday magazine (left, 1913), and New Year's edition (opposite, 1928).

dismissed all his press men, and a lot of the guys lived in the east and lost their homes, so they never came back, just took their retirements."

Passing by the shop, Makkos often dialed the number printed on the wall outside. A year or so later, when Andre Laborde needed help clearing out, Makkos received a return call. Over the next three months, for a couple of hours every day, Makkos helped Laborde pack up and haul away tools, bars of lead, and other gritty printing ephemera. Makkos recalls shoveling small mountains of loose lead typefaces into many plastic rain buckets.

One of his friends, who worked at a now-defunct French Quarter bookstore, later gave Makkos a 9-by-13 Kelsey Excelsior press—age unknown, patented 1897—one of the largest tabletop models that company ever manufactured. "The guy'd had this press in the bookstore's bottom-level slave quarters. They'd done one broadside run with it in the '90s. It was rusted to shit, but I took it anyway, took it apart, took a wire brush to it and some Scotch-Brite. Spent a couple weeks on it, and now it's fully functional."

But his very first press, salvaged from the Bargain Center thrift, junk, and costume shop in the Bywater neighborhood, carries the most significance in terms of his newspaper project. Cast and assembled in the late 1870s or early 1880s, Makkos' favorite iron proofing press bears the stamp of R. Hoe, who in 1847 patented the type of web press that surely printed his entire *Picayune* collection. Makkos' R. Hoe is a whole different 500-pound beast: "After the type would be set by hand or else made on the linotype machine, they'd then put the type into the column-sized galley trays," he

explains. "Then they'd lay a sheet of paper down and hand ink it just to have a proof to give to the editor."

The R. Hoe came with no letterpress type, just the rollers. It took three men to heave it upstairs to his room. Makkos rubs its gilded flower-work with pride. "I sent a photo of this to the Print History Museum in upstate New York, and they say they've never seen one like it," he says. Based on his research, Makkos hypothesizes his R. Hoe came over on a ship and lived in New Orleans for more than 130 years, and was perhaps used by the union press on Chartres Street in the French Quarter, one of the first print shops in Louisiana owned and operated by its workers. Though tough to corroborate, based on his research thus far Makkos calls his R. Hoe the oldest working press in Louisiana.

Lacking wood typeset letters for his press, Makkos scoured salvage stores, searching for historic New Orleans type; he recently scored a Touro Hospital letterhead print block from the early 20th century. Makkos and an assistant have also begun sorting the buckets and drawers of galley type salvaged from Laborde's, a task akin to completing a jigsaw puzzle of several million pieces. It has taken them a year to find and organize just two-dozen complete typefaces of sometimes-microscopic letters and numbers.

IN 2012, THE *TIMES-PICAYUNE* BECAME PRIMARILY DIGITAL, printing the paper only three days a week plus occasional supplements, and decreasing the chance that some future Makkos might one day stumble upon, say, a rare, comprehensive cache of classic *Picayunes* from 2013. So Makkos takes his find seriously. "We first have to digitally archive all of this more thoroughly, in a way the *Times-Picayune* itself either couldn't or just never bothered to," he says. While organizing the papers, he plans to pass them through more high-tech and, more important, larger scanners than were originally used to create the *Picayune's* current microfilm archive. He's applied for various grants to fund this effort, and hopes to archive the entire collection before the city's tricentennial celebration in 2018. His longer-term goal is to create a research archive and printing museum in New Orleans.

But he's just as excited to let the collection inspire new art objects, created on his R. Hoe. Within the year, he will hand-print limited runs of historic images from his collection and create a series of books, the first exploring and documenting ways in which women are represented in Eliza Jane Nicholson's choice of iconography. To that end, Makkos is currently at work recreating print blocks that feature illustrations from the Victorian-era newspaper. "You couldn't reproduce it like this off of microfilm," he says. "Having these originals is the only thing that makes this possible." On his 1870s proofing press, Makkos will combine his new photoblocks with the old lead typefaces he shoveled out of Laborde's, to recreate important parts of the Eliza Jane Nicholson Collection, using the same methods that created the original newspapers in the mountain of tubes and boxes that today fill his studio, and his life. **CJR**

MICHAEL PATRICK WELCH is a New Orleans-based journalist and author of four books. His writing has appeared in *Salon*, *McSweeney's*, *The Oxford American*, and *Vice*, among other publications.



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A movement's moment?

Common Core opens the door for news literacy to expand in the classroom

BY BEN ADLER

The news-literacy movement was born in the middle of the last decade, in response to the challenges news consumers face in the digital age. In fairly short order, the longstanding brands that had delivered the news in established formats had become part of a cacophonous and uneven information ecosystem in which partisans, charlatans, experts, and amateurs of all stripes and competencies deliver a daily torrent of “news” and commentary, via myriad channels. Much of this information has never been vetted, or even sourced.

How is a reader or viewer—especially one not weaned on the old-media standards—to know what information, or outlet, is trustworthy? That was the fundamental question that animated the news-literacy pioneers.

The larger context for the creation of news literacy was rising concern over American ignorance—of not only the wider world but also the basics of life in the republic. Surveys regularly showed that most young adults could not find the latest country we were bombing on a map. News illiteracy threatened to worsen the situation.

Howard Schneider, a former editor at *Newsday*, took the first step in 2005, creating a news-literacy class for undergraduates at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. After launching the university’s journalism school, Schneider realized that too many of the students knew too little about how journalism worked to go straight into training as reporters. The news-literacy curriculum he developed teaches students how to separate ads from editorial content and opinion from straight reporting, and how to determine the accuracy of sourcing. And, perhaps most important, why all that matters. Today, not just the journalism students, but roughly one-third of every freshman class take the news-literacy course.

Three years after Schneider built the Stony Brook program, Alan Miller left his job as an investigative reporter at the *Los Angeles Times* and founded The News Literacy Project (NLP), which brings professional journalists into

classrooms, physically and digitally, to teach students how to separate the informational wheat from the chaff. NLP has since formed partnerships with the Chicago public school system, schools in New York City, and the suburbs of Washington, DC.

One of the challenges for these programs has always been a limited reach. NLP to date has reached more than 10,000 students, which is still just a tiny fraction of the American student body. Digital technology may allow them to find a much larger audience: NLP hopes to expand dramatically online, and teachers are beginning to incorporate news-literacy strategies and projects into general-education classes. Every summer, Stony Brook’s Center for News Literacy trains roughly 20 K-12 teachers how to incorporate news literacy into English, history, and other classes. And Newsela, a startup founded last year, offers digital news-literacy curricula and lesson plans.

But news literacy remains marginalized in the sprawling and emotional debate about how to fix what ails America’s system of education.

That may be about to change. The Common Core standards, released in 2010, are a state-led effort to create ambitious national benchmarks for English language arts and math. They have been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia. For most states, 2014-2015 will be the first year that they take effect. The English standards broaden expectations in nonfiction reading and critical-thinking skills. No

Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Bush administration's signature education reform initiative, was widely criticized for its narrow focus on math and reading comprehension. English exams focused on the technical components of language and the basic meaning of a passage. The Common Core standards, by contrast, would have students engage with the quality of an author's argument or analyze how the narrator's point of view affects his or her perception. They do not require news literacy per se, but many proponents and educators believe news literacy programs—which are fundamentally about critical thinking—will grow in popularity as a way of teaching the skills that Common Core demands.

"There is an increased, broader interest in media literacy," says Joe Kahne, director of the Civic Engagement Research Group at Mills College, referring to news literacy's more established academic ancestor. "And a significant portion of that is increased interest in news literacy. Common Core is one of the drivers of that interest because it emphasizes the ability to make sense of information."

NLP's Alan Miller puts it more succinctly: "We're really swimming with the educational current now."

Bonnie Mary Warne, who teaches at South Fremont High School in St. Anthony, ID, attended the Stony Brook summer program and now deploys news literacy in her 10th-grade language-arts classes. "Right now, I'm teaching students that they need to have evidence to back up their claims," she says. For example, Warne will give her students an article that prompts a public-policy question and ask them to assess whether the story's sources have legitimate expertise to answer it. "The Common Core standard requires students to write counterarguments, so in their counterargument they can express their opinion of why the other side is inaccurate or too biased to be a reliable source."

Unfortunately, there has not been a national survey tracking news-literacy programs over time, because they are so new. And the Common Core is even newer, so it is simply too soon to measure whether the Common Core is leading to more news-literacy lessons in the classroom.

The interest in news literacy is certainly there among teachers. The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) at Tufts University recently conducted a national survey of high school civics and American government teachers, and found the overwhelming majority devote at least one class to "critical analysis of news coverage" and nearly 23 percent of those surveyed said it is "a major emphasis of the whole course."

Other experts are more skeptical. The Common Core-aligned standardized tests being developed by Pearson will be released in the spring and implemented in the fall. There is a limit to how much the Common Core will provide incentives for news-literacy education if it isn't in the tests. "The Common Core could have a positive effect on news literacy, but I'm not sure it will," says Diane Hess, senior vice president at the Spencer Foundation, which supports educational research. "We don't know if [the tests] will have anything in them that is aligned with the goals of news literacy."

Jay McTighe, an educational author and consultant and a former schoolteacher and state education administrator in

Maryland, stresses that just because there is an opportunity for news literacy to expand doesn't mean schools will get on board. "Schools are often slow to change," he says. "There may be an increase of critical reading that relies not on news media but on traditional textbooks," for instance.

Whether or not schools pursue news literacy also depends on which critical-thinking skills are emphasized and how they are applied. "The Common Core is very promising for civics but not really sufficient by itself because it tends to put almost all emphasis on understanding texts as writing or communication and not on understanding things like institutional context," says Peter Levine, director of CIRCLE. In other words, the Common Core curriculum increases the likelihood that high school students would watch the president's State of the Union address and read coverage of it in news outlets. But the skill set being emphasized by their teachers might be focused on rhetoric: How did the president try to communicate different concepts and how effective were his different approaches? So a commentator saying she is impressed, or not, by the president's speech might be used to understand political communication, rather than the news media's coverage of the speech.

It is also worth remembering that information technology is changing so quickly that no one can project what digital news media will look like in five years, never mind how news-literacy education will have to evolve to keep pace. In the last decade, when the rise of partisan news bubbles and untrained bloggers had journalistic graybeards wringing their hands, one would have taught students to not automatically believe everything they read on the Drudge Report or some random blog. Now, students must be taught not to believe everything being shared on social-media networks. Think of the Twitter hoaxes during Hurricane Sandy, or the missing Brown University student, later found dead, who was incorrectly identified as a Boston Marathon bomber by Reddit users. These are examples the News Literacy Project brings to classrooms, but they must inevitably play catchup. As this issue was going to press, for instance, a reality television producer tweeted a false story of an altercation he claimed to have been involved in on an airplane. It went viral on Twitter, and news outlets repeated the story, including a BuzzFeed item that got 1.4 million readers, before it was revealed to be a hoax.

Technological change is just one of the cultural shifts that bedevil anyone trying to teach news literacy. Teaching students to assess a source's credibility presumes they will recognize the legitimacy of traditional credentials. In this ideologically polarized era, will students from some conservative families dismiss a source's doctorate as evidence of liberal academic indoctrination rather than objective expertise? So far, news-literacy educators say they haven't encountered that situation, but they acknowledge that such challenges may arise as the programs reach a broader audience. Still, they are confident that they will soon be lucky enough to have such a problem. **CJR**

BEN ADLER covers climate-change policy for *Grist* and is a contributing editor for *CJR*. This is the first of what will be periodic coverage of news literacy and its attendant issues in the magazine and at CJR.org. Funding for this coverage is provided by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.



Ideas + Reviews

ESSAY

Joining the chorus

Albert Camus' journalism, more than his famous fiction, reveals the evolution of his thinking on life and how to live it

BY ELIAS ALTMAN

When Albert Camus said on the evening of December 12, 1957, "I have not yet given my opinion about Algeria, but I will if you ask me," he was making an offer that students at the University of Stockholm could not refuse. Two days earlier, Camus had become the second-youngest recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature, and Algeria, the setting for his world-famous novels *The Stranger* and *The Plague*, as well as his place of birth, was the site of an escalating colonial war. What's more, in February 1956, Camus had resigned from his editorializing at *L'Express* and imposed upon himself a public silence about the conflict, having failed in a series of articles and meetings to convince either French officials or members of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) of the virtues of dialogue and the need for a civilian truce.

So even if an Algerian man hadn't asked Camus that December night why he neglected to sign petitions on behalf of Algerians and then insulted him, the writer's opinion was bound to be newsworthy. Amid interruptions, Camus asserted, "You are in favor of democracy in Algeria, so please be democratic now and let me speak Let me finish my sentences, because the meaning of a sentence often isn't clear until it ends." After citing his credentials as a journalist who had once been forced to leave Algeria for defending Muslims and stating that while publicly silent he had not ceased to act, Camus said, "I have always condemned terror. I must also condemn the blind terrorism that can be seen in the streets of Algiers, for example, which someday might strike my mother or family. I believe in justice, but I will defend my mother before justice." When Camus ended that sentence, he neither knew that its meaning was unclear nor that his words on the matter would be so quotable as to become in effect his last: In 1960, while riding from Lourmarin to Paris with his friend and publisher Michel Gallimard, he died in a car crash at the age of 46.

Ever since *Le Monde* published the sole account of the exchange, the oft-called "famous" or "controversial" remark has been open to interpretation. Its weighing of one life with the principled fate of many has been attacked as a cowardly stance on colonialism—rendering him reminiscent of the youngest Nobel recipient, Rudyard Kipling—and defended as a humanist's nuanced critique of terrorism. It isn't surprising, then, that the Stockholm incident is revisited in two new books, Camus' *Algerian Chronicles*, edited and introduced by Alice Kaplan and translated by Arthur Goldhammer, and *A Life Worth Living: Albert Camus and the Quest for Meaning*, by Robert Zaretsky. What is surprising is that Kaplan and Zaretsky both

present an alternate version of events that was recently endorsed by the editors of Camus' *Complete Works*, based on the testimony of Camus' Swedish translator, who heard the controversial words differently: "People are now planting bombs in the tramways of Algiers. My mother might be on one of those tramways. If that is justice, then I prefer my mother." This straightening of the record, more clearly a refutation of a single definition of justice, isn't the only likeness the books share, and, read in tandem, the one fills the other out. The concise biography gives backstory to the life Camus led over the 19-year period that his Algerian essays span, and the journalism in *Chronicles* is a very useful frame for that engaged life. To grasp what Camus meant in Stockholm, it's necessary to understand his intellectual and moral development as spelled out in his readings of Greek tragedy and his writings for *Combat*, a French Resistance newspaper, during and after World War II.

There's an earlier anecdote about Camus that neither of these books mentions—although Zaretsky discussed it in a previous work, *Albert Camus: Elements of a Life*—that foreshadowed his stand on Algeria. After recanting his support for the purge of Nazi collaborators during the postwar trials in France, in some cases having called for the death penalty, Camus ran into an old friend in late 1946. The friend had just joined the Communist Party at a time when doing so meant explaining away Josef Stalin's gulags. As recorded in his notebook, Camus said:

"Then you'll be a murderer."
 "I've already been one," the friend replied.
 "I too. But I don't want to be any more."
 "You were my sponsor."
 That was true.
 "Listen, Tar. This is the real problem: whatever happens, I shall always defend you against the firing squad. But you will be obliged to approve my being shot. Think about that."

If the formulation sounds simple, something out of Ethics 101, that's because it is: When Camus wasn't

waxing lyrical or glossing the work of more rigorous thinkers, he displayed a gift (and a curse) for simplicity. And so while there is a certain timeliness with these two books, in that 2013 was the centenary of Camus' birth and *Algerian Chronicles*—his last book to be translated into English—is newly relevant in light of the Arab Spring, they are also important for their reminder of a simple point that Camus held dear: Life may be shaped by ideology, but it is lived exclusively by men and women.

It was the defense of those messy, imperfect lives that Camus insisted upon with his friend Tar, and his editorial journalism, where he turned his private thoughts into public stances, records the decisions and revisions that led to his insistence on moderation above political expediency. As a world war ended and a cold one began—two superpowers as ready to kill as to convert—Camus floated the radical notion that he had no right to sacrifice another's life for the greater good or a brighter tomorrow, and he questioned all who said they did. God and history are easily claimed allies, and life is often cheap when either is on your side. Camus hadn't pulled any triggers during the postwar purge in France, but he called for the loading of the rifles—that was enough, for he came to believe that words well-aimed are as deadly as bullets and also the only defense against them. He decided his hubris could not bear repeating: too many mistakes of that caliber, and there won't be anyone left to decide who was right and who was wrong.

BEFORE CAMUS TRIED HIS HAND AT journalism, he took to the stage. He completed his thesis at the University of Algiers in 1936 and graduated to running a theater company. This was during Camus' two-year stint as a member of the Communist Party, and the theater donated ticket sales to unemployed workers in Algiers. The know-your-audience theory of programming led to the staging of Aeschylus' tragedy *Prometheus Bound* in 1937. The god who disobeyed Zeus and shared the prized power of fire with mortals had been a fixture of the leftist-hero circuit since at least 1841, when in his doctoral

thesis Karl Marx called Prometheus "the most eminent saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar." Camus echoed the sentiment: "A revolution is always carried out against the Gods—from that of Prometheus onward."

Camus was soon ready for his next role, one for which he could write and deliver his own lines, and he joined the young staff of the *Alger-Républicain*. The startup newspaper in Algiers was in line with the Popular Front movement led by socialist León Blum, who coauthored the unrealized Blum-Violette proposal, which would have granted civil and voting rights to the more than 20,000 Algerian Muslims. In one of his first signed pieces, Camus wrote of his visit to a docked prison ship filled with Arabs: "there is no sight more dismal than that of men who have become less than human." It was in the same spirit, which came to animate his best writing, that in the spring of 1939 he began his multi-article coverage of a famine in the north, the first reported piece collected in *Algerian Chronicles*, called "The Misery in Kabylia."

Camus wasted little time determining that the problem of the famine was economic not ecological, the solution not charity in the form of a few tons of grain but an overhaul of France's colonial policies. Men need to work in order to buy food, Camus conceded, but they cannot work when they don't eat. In response to the rightwing backlash his reports inspired, he wrote, "These days, it seems that one is not a good Frenchman if one speaks of the misery of a French territory. I must say that it is hard to know nowadays what one must do to be a good Frenchman." Camus exhorted his countrymen to live up to the ideals of a republic that had once discarded the divine right of kings in favor of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*. To him, the choice was clear.

A few months after his last dispatch on the famine appeared, Germany and the USSR signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the news of one African colony's travails was pushed off the front page. On September 7, with Nazi troops in Poland, Camus again saw the black and the white of a conflict. "You can't say: 'I don't know about it,'" he wrote in his notebooks. "One

either fights or collaborates It is both impossible and immoral to judge an event from outside. One keeps the right to hold this absurd misfortune in contempt only by remaining inside it." Although already embarked on what would become a multi-genre trilogy of the absurd—the play *Caligula*, the philosophical essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*, and the novel *The Stranger*—Camus couldn't anticipate the heights of absurdity that the coming war would reach.

TO RECUPERATE FROM A BOUT OF HIS recurrent tuberculosis, Camus left Algeria in 1942 for a mountain village in France and the following year joined the staff of the clandestine newspaper *Combat*. After the liberation of Paris in August 1944, his newly attained editorship of the paper assumed greater complexity. Without a common foe to unite disparate factions, the Resistance-bred affiliations between Catholics and Communists, socialists and conservatives, quickly weakened; the old question of power, who wielded it and how, reasserted itself. No small issue was how to deal with collaborators: Vichy officials, opportunistic industrialists, complacent journalists (some 32,000 French citizens were eventually imprisoned for collaboration). Days after the liberation Camus in *Combat* refused to distinguish between killers and accomplices, and he soon wrote that "it is pointless to contest the terrifying fact that we will be obliged to destroy a living part of this country in order to save its soul." By then he was in a debate, played out in the editorial pages, with François Mauriac. The Catholic novelist and future Nobel Prize in Literature—winner had worried about the Resistance's postwar potential for excess from the start: here he pointed out that "inquisitors also burned bodies in order to save souls."

Camus offered analysis on news foreign and domestic—the role of journalism in a free France, FDR's reelection, General Franco's Spain—but his back and forth with Mauriac forced him to be specific about his own calls for morality to enter into politics. Camus was fond of implicating his readers; now he implicated himself. It is often

only in dialogue that either position becomes truly defined, and he had to follow his logic through to the gallows. When the first death sentence for a collaborator came down, he wrote in his favored first-person plural, "And we have chosen to embrace human justice, with its terrible imperfections, while seeking anxiously to correct it by clinging desperately to honesty." Divine justice may have sufficed for a believer like Mauriac, but eternity was not soon enough for most men; justice needed to be terrible and swift. That the death sentence in question went to

Life may be shaped by ideology, but it is lived exclusively by men and women.

a journalist and not, say, Marshal Petain, who led the Vichy government, or a member of the paramilitary Milice, which deported Jews, indicated how those imperfections would play out.

Through all this, Algeria was not far from Camus' thoughts. Six days after Germany surrendered, he published the first of six articles in *Combat* that derived from a three-week visit to his homeland. It was a tough time to rouse readers to action around another famine abroad, but Camus persisted, running the pieces on the front page. "We are condemned to live together," he wrote. Send justice, grain, and money. He informed his countrymen that hundreds of thousands of Algerian Arabs had just fought under the same tricolor, and that since France had failed to assimilate or enfranchise those Arabs earlier, with the modest Blum-Violette proposal, it wouldn't be long before the colony would fail France. The realities of famine do not change, Camus found, but their repercussions do.

Desperation came to color much of Camus' writing. "The world is what it is, which isn't much." So began his editorial of August 8, 1945, published two days after the US dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. One of the only other denunciations in the French press was by François Mauriac, and it was no longer the only issue on which the two men shared an opinion. Camus now judged the postwar purge a failure: "It seems that the straight path of justice is not easy to find amid the cries of hatred coming from one side and the special pleading of guilty consciences coming from the other." The black and the white had turned gray. The wisdom of Mauriac's approach had lain in its appeal to charity and moderation, qualities to be sought not for their status as Christian virtues but for their ability to check man's unending passion for finding himself in the right. The perils of this passion increasingly preoccupied Camus—how a blanket defense of one's rightness could undermine, even destroy, the authority of what may have made it right in the first place.

And so, in late 1946, shortly before his telling exchange with Tar, Camus took down the talking points of another meeting: a night of conversation about morality and politics at André Malraux's house with Jean-Paul Sartre, Arthur Koestler, and Manés Sperber. Koestler spoke of the necessity for "a minimum political code of ethics"; Malraux wondered if the fate of the proletariat was always the paramount concern; Camus asked if the beginning of hope wasn't a recognition that, whether coming from the schools of Nietzsche or Marx, they had been wrong in denying moral values; and Sartre refused to denounce the USSR exclusively, comparing the deportation of Russians to the lynching of African-Americans. ("Yes. Etc., etc.," it seems, was all poor Sperber mustered.) "And during all this time," Camus wrote, summarizing the evening, "the impossibility of determining how much fear or truth enters into what each one says." The times had changed, and what had been a united front was now a fractured Left. Each

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of the former allies would go on to take his own stand in relation to Soviet communism. Malraux served for 10 years as minister of culture under Charles de Gaulle, Sartre fashioned his own brand of militant Marxism and anticolonialism, and Camus fell back on humanism, the only defense he saw against cold war totalitarianism.

In his last major *Combat* writings, a series called *Neither Victims nor Executioners*, Camus addressed this prob-

Camus placed man in a situation, absurd or otherwise, and tried to show how he might work out his salvation.

lem of fear, truth, and division: "We live in terror because persuasion is no longer possible, because man has been delivered entirely into the hands of history and can no longer turn toward that part of himself which is as true as the historic part, and which he discovers when he confronts the beauty of the world and the people's faces." Here is Camus in his element: He's not wrong, he's just rococo. Whether in the face of Sartre in Paris or an Algerian in Stockholm, Camus hoped to discover what was shared; he believed there was always something, and that whatever it was it would triumph over nothing. He had seen men disagree yet unite to fight the Nazis, and now the USSR's communism and the US's capitalism both ended up with cost-benefit analyses that rated such truth, beauty, and dialogue expendable. But what could replace these systems? That is always the question. Camus offered prescriptions—such as internationalism—but he was more effective at diagnosing, and he returned to the Greek god to describe the scope of the ailment: "Man today believes that we must first of all free the body, even if

the mind must suffer temporary death. But can the mind die temporarily? Indeed, if Prometheus were to reappear, modern man would treat him as the gods did long ago: they would nail him to a rock, in the name of the very humanism he was the first to symbolize." Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

ZARETSKY, IN HIS PROLOGUE TO *A Life Worth Living*, and Goldhammer, in his translator's note to *Algerian Chronicles*, classify Camus as a moralist, and both offer explanation, knowing that Americans will quickly find the person so-labeled guilty of presumption and pretension. While a true *moraliste* seeks to remind man of what he is and what he can be, it is also true that most people don't have the time to be reminded of either. It's also hard to render the disparity between what we are and what we might be with a light touch—writing for the ages invites a heavy hand—which is why Camus' novels can sometimes feel as if they operate in two dimensions. At his best, in his fiction and nonfiction, Camus placed man in a situation, absurd or otherwise, and tried to show how he might work out his salvation, without God or faith in the progressive nature of history. The crisis in Algeria placed Camus himself in such a situation. His newspaper career had begun on the question of what was to be done there and it concluded on it as well. His moderation was put to the test.

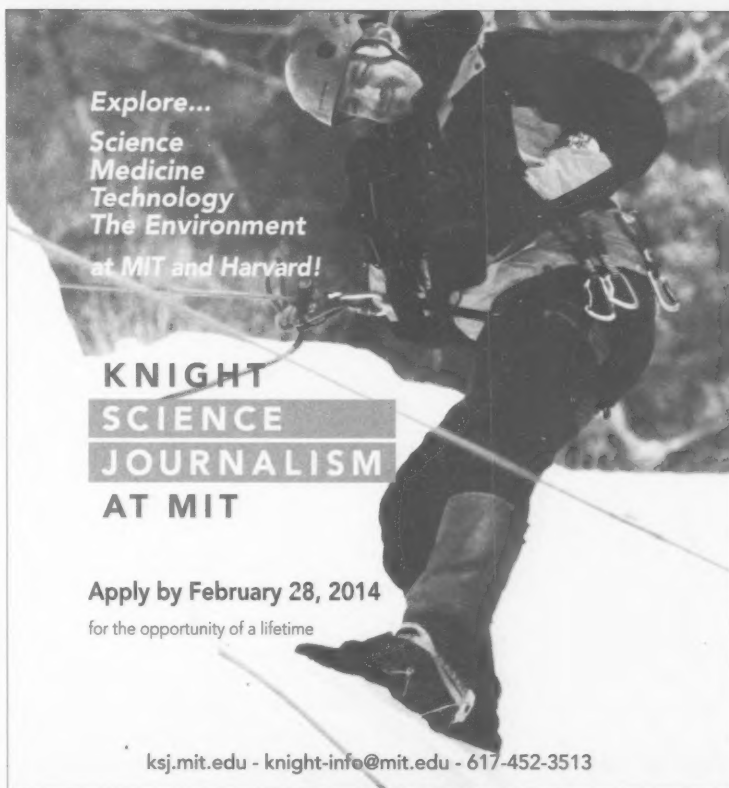
He had claimed in *Neither Victims nor Executioners* that there was "only one honorable choice: to wager everything on the belief that in the end words will prove stronger than bullets." It was a bold bet. As the FLN and the French government increasingly embraced the methods most readily available to them—the one carrying out targeted hit-and-run terror attacks, the other replying with disproportionate and sometimes indiscriminate force, including torture—Camus began writing editorials in *L'Express* in 1955, condemning the tactics of both. Again, he was stuck in the middle. He traveled to Algiers and met with moderates to urge a civilian truce and to

remind them that they should "refuse both to employ and to submit to terror." A crowd of Algerians outside the hall threw rocks at the window. It's unclear whether life informed art or art informed life, or if there's even a useful distinction, but what Camus wrote in "On the Future of Tragedy," a lecture he delivered in Athens that same year, expressed his conflicted feelings about Algeria:

Prometheus is both just and unjust, and Zeus who pitilessly oppresses him also has right on his side. Melodrama could thus be summed up by saying: "Only one side is just and justifiable," while the perfect tragic formula would be: "All can be justified, no one is just." This is why the chorus in classical tragedies generally advises prudence. For the chorus knows that up to a certain limit everyone is right and that the person who, from blindness or passion, oversteps this limit is heading for catastrophe if he persist in his desire to assert a right he thinks he alone possesses.

For his final role, Camus joined the chorus. Which is why in Stockholm he rejected any justice that allowed for the killing of civilians and why he also wrote a letter to *Le Monde*, saying that the Algerian who had challenged him "knew what he was talking about, and his face reflected not hatred but unhappiness and despair. I share that unhappiness. It is the face of my country." It was to that unified country that Camus felt he always remained faithful, and even during his public silence he acted behind the scenes, protesting in letters some 150 death sentences issued by the French government to Algerian freedom fighters. He published *Algerian Chronicles* in 1958, six months after receiving the Nobel. At that time none of the major players much cared to listen to his call for prudence. Camus must have known that that, too, is generally what happens in classical tragedies. Words proved no match for bullets. **CJR**

ELIAS ALTMAN is an associate editor of Lapham's Quarterly.



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Uncommon ground

J. Anthony Lukas realized something larger than truth

BY LYNNELL HANCOCK

IN THE FALL OF 1974, BLACK SCHOOL-children from Boston's Roxbury neighborhood climbed into school buses bound for South Boston, the heart of the "riff-raff" Irish working classes. White "Townies" from Charlestown had scrawled "Kill Niggers" on apartment walls and set fire to straw effigies with black garbage-bag heads. Buses were burned, rocks hurled. Death threats and mutual resentment followed the black children into the school hallways and classrooms that first day, and for incendiary months to come.

Court-ordered busing that was meant to reverse stubborn de facto school segregation nearly ripped apart the social fabric of that historic city. It exposed the raw residue of Yankee guilt, black anger, and Irish immigrant antipathy—the churning clash of cultures that defines America. The country's racial enmity showed its ugliest face not on the steps of an Arkansas high school this time, but in genteel Boston, the intellectual capital of the abolitionist movement, the "cradle of liberty."

Into this firestorm walked J. Anthony Lukas, a reporter's reporter with a fierce curiosity and an endless capacity to inhabit the lives of his subjects—to plumb the depths of the "tribal histories" that trailed behind them. He wasn't so much looking for truth in its purest sense, or the quaint satisfaction of solutions, as for something much bigger, much

messier. He was looking to understand the fundamental roots of America's fears and tensions, where they originated, why they are so often about race.

More than seven years later, Lukas emerged with a 650-page masterpiece that defies definition. *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families* is a work of historic nonfiction about Boston's school busing crisis from 1968 to 1978. That's the catalogue-card version. It is also an ambitious tableau reaching back in time to the beginnings of Puritan America, through the civil rights era to the present, circling back to the origins of slavery, of Ireland's turmoil, and of church history, legal history, the press, and urban politics.

Describing his intellectual journey, Lukas told one interviewer, "The book didn't take me from left to right or from right to left, but from the party of simplicity to the party of complexity." It's a definition of objectivity.

Lukas probably had no intention of writing the great American education story. But no nonfiction narrative journalist has touched his genius on the subject since. His newspaper career up to that point had taken him from covering crime in Baltimore and politics in Chicago, to foreign conflicts in the Congo, Pakistan, India, and South Africa. For much of that time he worked for *The New York Times* and its Sunday magazine. His previous freelance project had entangled him in

the drama of Watergate for a book he called *Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years*. Restless on his lofty perch looking down on the world's and the nation's politics, Lukas wanted instead to pull his reporter's chair up to the kitchen tables of ordinary Americans, to enter their lives and their minds.

His inspiration for *Common Ground* came from the news. Senator Ted Kennedy had been driven from a speaker's platform by an angry mob of Irish Catholics incensed by his support for school integration. He was forced to take refuge in a nearby federal building—one named after his brother John. "What in the world is going on when Ted Kennedy is driven to shelter by his 'own people?'" Lukas remembered asking himself at the time. "What in the world is a pretty good starting place for a story?"

That world, Lukas intuited, would lead him into the heart of the American dilemma: the tattered promise of an equal shot at prosperity and education for all, for descendants of slaves as well as immigrant strivers. What happens when institutions like public schools are asked to shoulder the weight of racial disparities and disappointments? Who wins, who loses? Lukas decided to enter that world as close to the ground as a journalist could, through the deeply flawed lives of ordinary Bostonians—a poor, passionate black mother of six; a working-class Irish Catholic mother of seven; and a privileged Yankee couple dedicated to making integration work.

Lukas not only defined the education issue of our time but also located its center of gravity: inside neighborhoods, public schools, families' homes, and people's minds. And his book reminds us just how far our focus has strayed. As the late author and journalist Herbert Mitgang said, "I believe that what happened in Boston was not a random series of events but the acting out of the burden of American history."

Reading *Common Ground* when it first came out was exhilarating. It felt almost like attending a sweeping seminar on everything you need to know about America, with a spellbinding storyteller at the podium. Boston's wounds were still relatively raw. Hostilities still crackled. There was an urgency to understand what just happened.



The American dilemma Residents of Boston's Charlestown neighborhood react to forced busing in 1975.

For those who lived in the midst of the riots, it was a revelation. One journalist who grew up poor and Irish Catholic in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood recently told me he never understood what all the turmoil was about until he read the book. "*Common Ground* changed the way I saw my origins," said Kerry Burke, a longtime crime reporter at the *New York Daily News*. As a child, Burke was bused from one have-not neighborhood to another for elementary and middle school. "It was the difference between being from nowhere and then realizing I had lived through the death of the civil rights movement."

Reading it today is still as daunting as it is inspiring. It feels, in the end, close to an act of despair. There is considerable evidence that creating district-wide diversity can be a powerful reform tool, but few reformers now consider it seriously. Mixing rich and poor, black and white children in classrooms is thought to be a dusty notion from a naïve time.

It reminds us that the conversation that used to be so open has turned inward.

National school-reform notions from our last decade still wrap themselves in the rhetoric of civil rights. President George W. Bush codified "the soft bigotry of low expectations" and "closing the black-white achievement gap" in his signature No Child Left Behind policy. The preferred means to the end are now top-down management tools: rating teachers, adding layers of tests, closing failing schools, creating a scatter-shot collection of privately-run public charters in their stead.

Busing programs have slowly been dismantled across the nation. No federal incentives encourage districts to create equity across their populations. Today, about one-third of black and Latino children are attending racially isolated schools. Child poverty inches up every year. It's not exactly the outcome the US Supreme Court justices envisioned when they ruled in 1954 that separate

schools were inherently unequal. And the achievement gap between the races, after narrowing somewhat in the 1980s, is now wider than ever. What did Boston really endure, and for what?

READERS TALK ABOUT "DEVOURING" books. That's how I remember my first encounter with *Common Ground* in 1985, the year it was published. I carted the weighty tome around New York City, stealing reading time when I could on long subway rides. The screeching clatter of the train provided an appropriate soundtrack for the urgency in my head.

Reading it again takes me back not just to Boston, but to the Bronx, where my son attended kindergarten in the public school on the corner when I was a rookie freelancer for *The Village Voice*. From the first day I gazed through the wire fence watching children line up by size in the schoolyard, I realized that this overcrowded elementary school was a minefield of problems and untold stories.

Scores of buses drove in and out of the Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood in relative peace, dropping off Hispanic and African-American children from the South Bronx—the “busers,” they were called. Joining them were the mostly white “walkers” from the surrounding middle-class neighborhoods. If integration was the purpose, it dis-

***Common Ground* is long overdue for a modern sequel.**

integrated as soon as the children entered the classrooms. By first grade they were already sorted by so-called ability, a predictable proxy for race. The top first-grade classes with the strongest teachers were mostly white neighborhood kids. The bottom classes with the least experienced teachers were mostly low-income nonwhites from south of Fordham Road. Their education destinies were determined by age 6.

Racial segregation had moved quietly, with a wink and a nod, inside the schoolhouse doors. School administrators insisted there was no deliberate effort to track children by race. The principal distrusted the white parents who raised objections. After all, white families had options. Many had finagled transfers for their children to a wealthier, whiter, elementary school in Riverdale. There was a tacit acceptance of the assumption that true integration was impossible to achieve.

I was a fairly recent transplant from Iowa, at a loss to make sense of the hostilities flaring up between the principal and the cultural stew of parents. Racial friction seemed to be everywhere, but acknowledged nowhere. I plowed through *Common Ground* searching for answers, trying to understand the historical and legal roots of urban racial tensions. If Lukas’ account of the Boston riots didn’t exactly change my life, it gave it a swift kick down an untraveled road.

I had a moment of recognition when I read that Joan and Colin Diver, the Harvard-educated gentrifiers in *Common*

Ground, moved to the South End and helped create a model school for integrated education. I had also joined a group of progressive parents and educators who created a public school in the Bronx that mixed children by race in every grade. Both my children attended. An endgame seemed possible.

I realize now that I read *Common Ground* far too quickly nearly 30 years ago, and possibly for the wrong reasons. *Common Ground* is not the kind of book that can be sifted for quick truths. Lukas resists the typical critic’s insistence that works of social-policy journalism must come complete with a checklist of pat solutions. Any understanding that emerges from his book, he once said, should “seep out through the interstices of the three families.”

It demands a more measured, patient reader. Given this second chance, I understood more clearly how his technique serves his purpose. Lukas tips us off on page one that *Common Ground* will be full of surprises. He defies expectations by providing no prologue, no roadmap laying out the book’s themes and motivations. Instead, he launches right into the story, almost daring readers to hitch along for the journey.

We might expect the book to open with one of the explosive riots that were synonymous in the public’s mind with Boston and busing. Instead, it begins with a quiet Cambridge scene inside the study of Colin Diver. He is contemplating his future after he graduates from Harvard Law School. This is the opening sentence: “Sunlight struck the gnarled limbs outside his window, casting a thicket of light and shadow on the white clapboards.”

It’s cinematic, in a gently menacing way. But it hardly signals the provocative book we are about to read. I worried for a brief moment that Lukas had chosen a pipe-smoking good-government voice to stand in for the author as the book’s wise and whitewashed narrator. But within a few pages we were deep into the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and hurtling headlong into the startling findings of the Kerner Commission report:

Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.... What white Americans have never fully understood—but

what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, white society condones it.

It’s vintage Lukas, circling around his subject, tugging at myriad narrative threads, and then swooping in for the kill, all the while painting a portrait of Boston, capturing its mood, its hostilities, its ethnic eccentricities, its politics and power structures, as well as its schools.

Then, in quick succession, each of the other two families is corralled into the same metaphorical space: the moment they all learned of Dr. King’s assassination. Rachel Twymon, a black mother originally from Roxbury, was carefully chosen to represent the presumed benefactors of busing; Alice McGoff was the working-class, Irish-Catholic resister. Add Diver and you have a classic formula that is particularly suited to policy non-fiction: anchoring a sprawling narrative in the lives of three—always three—ordinary people. If Lukas did not invent the model, then he certainly perfected it.

Social-justice journalism has many perils, most prominent among them the reporter’s inclination to line up villains and saints, and cast judgments accordingly. Where the writer’s sympathies lie is rarely a mystery. Lukas’ gift is that he never tips his hand and yet never loses his moral footing. Everyone knows how a Harvard-educated liberal from an upper-middle-class family is expected to react to nativist race baiting, or to a mob of teens spearing a random black pedestrian with an American flag. Yet Lukas manages to step into all his subjects’ lives armed with wisdom, never judgment, and never sacrificing a sharp analytic focus.

In fact, he is at his best when faced with untangling the contradictions of his characters and institutions. In his hands, Louise Day Hicks, the white-gloved “two-toilet Irish” School Committee chairwoman, is both the Bull Connor of Boston and the Lady Bountiful. The “Powder Keg” activists of Charlestown are either mavericks or mindless rioters. In my favorite section he turns his lens on *The Boston Globe*, accusing it of playing it safe with its busing coverage in a misguided attempt not to offend anyone. The veiled implication is that

its anodyne coverage was a calculated attempt to win the Pulitzer Prize, which the paper eventually did—and Lukas did as well, for *Common Ground*.

Lukas keeps readers off balance with his pace and structure. He may head dutifully down a chronological path, marching to the next School Committee meeting, the next violent confrontation, but then he whirls back in time, sometimes 400 years, to fill in the context. One minute Rachel Twymon, the black mother of six, is weeping in her Roxbury apartment over the murder of King. By the next Twymon chapter we are in 1619 on a sandy spit in Virginia where the first “Negar” slaves landed. Lukas pauses for long stretches to tell us about congressional politics in the days of “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, or the relationship of the Irish Catholic Church to the French Revolution.

It’s a tribute to Lukas’ storytelling skills that readers are pulled along with him, following what seems to be a relentless curiosity. He is never satisfied. How much is dedication to the craft, how much deep-rooted obsession? Lukas’ legendary intensity could seem extreme, in ways that sends chills down the spines of the average journalist.

Early on in his reporting, he chose one anti-busing family from Charlestown and followed them for four years, before deciding they weren’t right for his story. They were fanatics, he told an interviewer, which was more suited to a Dostoevsky novel than Lukas’ epic work. So he started from scratch with more moderate “Townies,” the McGoffs. Four years of reporting, gone.

Tony Lukas was a large-framed man. It’s difficult to imagine him settling into Alice McGoff’s kitchen in his 1950s-style tweed jacket as seven children clamored for attention. Still, it’s obvious from his incisive portrayals that he gained her trust and that of all his interview subjects. One telling glimpse into his methods and motivations came later in his own words, in an interview with the National Book Foundation in 1985. “Writers, I think, are, to one extent or another, damaged people,” he told the interviewer. “Writing is our way of repairing ourselves. In my own case, I was filling a hole in my life, which opened at the age of eight when my mother killed herself,

throwing our family into utter disarray. That’s one reason the book worked: I wasn’t just writing a book about busing. I was filling a hole in myself.”

In the last three pages of *Common Ground*, Lukas predicts the next consequence of this social experiment: white guilt, white flight. When Judge Wendell Arthur Garrity Jr. began examining Boston’s dilemma in 1972, some 90,000 students were enrolled in the city’s public schools, roughly 60 percent of them white. Four years later, 20,000 white children had transferred to parochial or private schools, or had left the city altogether. By 1976, Boston schools were 55-percent white. Today, Boston’s white school population is down to 13 percent; only 22 percent come from middle-class or affluent homes.

Colin and Joan Diver joined the exodus in the late ’70s, a capitulation so painful that it sent Joan to a doctor’s office literally gasping for air. They abandoned their diverse school for a home in a leafy suburb. Colin had reached his limit when he found himself armed with a baseball bat, chasing a mugger down his street.

The book ends with Colin reconstructing the 17th-century white picket fence around his Newton house, “the intricate junction of peg and hole sealing off the Divers’ perimeter, rearing its ivory spine against the world.” The image is eerily prescient. The white flight trend would continue, leaving many convinced that forced busing was the reason racial isolation in cities eventually became worse. But it’s too easy to draw a straight causal line. New York City, for example, chose neighborhood control over cross-district busing in the late ’60s, and its white population fled public schools as well. Today the city’s public schools are 85-percent black and Latino, and overwhelmingly poor, and its elite options are whiter and more Asian than ever before.

Mayor Thomas Menino finally ended Boston’s busing in March 2013, amid warnings that a return to neighborhood schools would inevitably lead to clustering the poorest students in the schools least prepared to help them succeed.

And yet only a few local community folks are taking the death of integration seriously. As journalist Dana Goldstein pointed out in *The Atlantic*, Boston’s

volatile legacy of mandatory busing gone wrong has obfuscated the real benefits of busing for integration when it’s done right. One model that has worked with some success in Hartford, CT, mixes high-quality magnet schools with voluntary busing; good schools draw suburban kids into blighted areas, and inner-city kids are bused out to fill their newly open seats. A variation on that theme has worked for more than 40 years in Raleigh, NC’s Wake County School District.

Lukas also forecast the current consuming debate over income inequality. Wherever Colin looked, Lukas wrote in the final pages, he saw legal remedies undercut by social and economic realities—“The terrible gap between the rich and the poor, the suburb and the city, the hopeful and the hopeless.” Pioneering research at Stanford has proved him right: Sean Reardon found that the rich-poor gap in test scores is about 40-percent larger today than it was 30 years ago.

Yet the education reforms favored by the last two White House administrations have aggressively avoided any policies designed to remedy the disparities. Instead, the most popular charter school networks champion a “no excuses” curriculum, which is based on the belief that educators use poverty as an excuse to avoid offering rigorous teaching to minority children. President Obama’s signature Race to the Top policy places a premium on creating charters and ranking teachers based on student test scores. No incentives are built in for districts that are raising achievement scores through large-scale integration.

One wonders what Lukas would have to say about this new technocratic climate. *Common Ground* is long overdue for a modern sequel. Tragically, Lukas died in 1997. He killed himself after submitting the final manuscript for his last book, *Big Trouble*, about the trial of a labor leader for the murder of an Idaho governor. Anthony Lukas was a perfectionist in a world that is far from perfect. *Common Ground* is probably as close to that ideal as journalism can get. **CJR**

LYNNELL HANCOCK is the H. Gordon Garbedian Professor of Journalism at Columbia, and director of the school’s Spencer Fellowship in Education Journalism.

Care and feeding of the press

Roosevelt did it, Taft did not, and that made all the difference

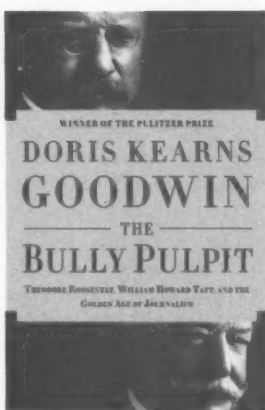
BY JULIA M. KLEIN

IT WAS PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT who, in 1906, famously used the term "muckrakers" to disparage investigative journalists. Referencing John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Roosevelt described a muckraker as a "man who in this life consistently refuses to see aught that is lofty, and fixes his eyes with solemn intentness only on that which is vile and debasing."

History softened the epithet as reporters proudly adopted it. And the term retains its association with what Doris Kearns Goodwin calls a "golden age of journalism"—when profits, prestige, and progressive principles, not to mention generous pay and perks, created a singularly influential class of investigative reporters.

One of the achievements of Goodwin's new history, *The Bully Pulpit*, is to show just how ironic it was that TR should lambast reporters for digging into the era's muck. Among her central arguments is that Roosevelt's accomplishments were due in large part to the transformation in public temper and perceptions fostered by the best of the new investigative journalists. These journalists, in turn, owed some of their success to personal access to a sitting president and an interchange so mutually synergistic that it would surely raise eyebrows today.

The Bully Pulpit interweaves three principal narrative strands: a biographical sketch of Roosevelt, a parallel



The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism

By Doris Kearns Goodwin
Simon & Schuster
910 pages
Hardcover, \$40

account of his great friend and later rival William Howard Taft, and an overview of the work of those writers and editors who made *McClure's Magazine* the preeminent periodical of its time.

Goodwin is the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* and *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*, as well as books on Lyndon B. Johnson

and the Kennedys. She is an assiduous researcher and a lucid writer who dares to tackle seemingly well-worn, subjects—like the big game of presidential history.

As with Lincoln and FDR, there is no shortage of Theodore Roosevelt biographies. Goodwin's signature talent is to reconfigure the contours of the genre by exploring historically significant relationships, like those of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt and Lincoln and his secretary of state, William Seward.

In *The Bully Pulpit*, she trains her eye on the Taft-Roosevelt friendship. Goodwin's strength is her deep empathy for her subjects. Its flipside is a tendency to sand away hard edges, to endow the past with a gauzily nostalgic glow. The sometimes inept Taft, scorned by history, has never seemed as heroic as he does here.

This latest book is a particularly ambitious project, ricocheting from presidential love stories to arcane legislative battles, from campaign anecdotes to journalistic squabbles. The mix can be unwieldy. At times *The Bully Pulpit* bogs down in detail, as in its chronicle of the impenetrable internecine battles that split Taft's Interior Department and fueled his estrangement from Roosevelt. But for the most part, Goodwin has produced a readable testament to the Progressive Era, a unique relationship between two presidents, and a great moment in magazine journalism.

Roosevelt was a charismatic, if pug-nacious, figure who exercised presidential power with ferocity and skill. One observer quoted by Goodwin lionized him as "a new kind of man," and declared that "his high spirits, his enormous capacity for work, his tirelessness, his forthrightness, his many striking qualities, gave a lift of the spirits to millions of average men." The Republican Roosevelt remains linked in the popular imagination to the bull moose and the Teddy bear, the Square Deal, the big stick, and the bully pulpit. He is credited for a trust-busting agenda that included landmark railroad regulation and passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act.

Taft is, in some ways, a more interesting case. If he is remembered at all, it is as a portly, conservative Republican who lost both his friendship with Roosevelt and the three-way 1912 election before

retreating into historical obscurity. (In fact, the post-presidential Taft attained his life's dream, ably filling the post of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.)

Like many of Taft's contemporaries, Goodwin seems to have been charmed by him, repeatedly lauding his kindness, good humor, and abundant gifts of both temperament and intellect. Apparently, to know the Cincinnati-born, Yale-educated Taft was to like him, or better. "One loves him at first sight," Roosevelt said. While Roosevelt could be contemptuous of those he disliked, he noted that Taft's "good nature, his indifference to self, his apparently infinite patience, enables him to get along with men."

A lawyer by training and a jurist by inclination, Taft served with distinction as a state and federal judge, US Solicitor General, governor-general of the Philippines, and US Secretary of War before ascending, with Roosevelt's indispensable support, to the presidency.

President Taft undoubtedly made some missteps, alienating conservationists and other Progressives enough to incite the ambitious Roosevelt's 1912 intraparty bid and then (after a disputatious convention) an epochal third-party challenge. By then, the outmaneuvered Taft had moved to the right, impelled (says Goodwin) by the need to retain establishment and business support. Roosevelt veered left, taking on the Democratic nominee, Woodrow Wilson.

Goodwin is at pains to show that Taft, for much of his political life, was, like Roosevelt, a moderate reformer—committed to capitalism but aware of the perils of monopoly power and sympathetic to the plight of labor. By the time of his first presidential campaign, Taft actually had positioned himself as more progressive than TR on at least one key issue, the fight to lower protective tariffs.

In Goodwin's estimation, where Taft fell short, compared to Roosevelt, was in his failure to engage and manipulate the press. From his days as police commissioner of New York, Roosevelt had sought to make friends of the press corps, allowing reporters such as Jacob Riis and Lincoln Steffens to help shape his agenda. As New York's governor, he enlisted Riis to take him on a tour of tenement sweatshops, an excursion that led to improved regulation.

This pattern of mutually beneficial cooperation continued with a select group of reporters. Many were in the employ of Samuel S. McClure, the brilliant and (according to Goodwin's description) probably bipolar founder of *McClure's*. In its heyday, *McClure's* gave its stars—including Steffens, Ida Tarbell, and Ray Stannard Baker—months to dig through documents, conduct interviews, and polish lengthy drafts.

Steffens' series on municipal corruption, collected in *The Shame of the Cities*, and Tarbell's exposé of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company, are among *McClure's* legacies. The publisher even funded novels, notably Frank Norris' *The Octopus*, based on a revolt against the predatory practices of a California railroad.

Goodwin's analysis of Progressive Era media raises fascinating questions, the implications of which she never fully explores. This particular golden age turns out to have been rife with apparent conflicts of interest. It was not simply that the work of *McClure's* writers, and of their counterparts at magazines such as *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, was inspired by a political agenda. This investigative tradition continues in publications such as *Mother Jones* and *The Nation*, and is embodied by advocacy journalists such as Glenn Greenwald.

Greenwald has risen to prominence by propounding a view of the federal government as an Orwellian invader of privacy. By contrast, the investigative reporters of *The Bully Pulpit* saw federal power as a brake on corporate and municipal corruption. Some worked intimately with the president to arouse public opinion and fashion reforms. Roosevelt invited his favorite reporters to dinner, showed them drafts of his speeches, and facilitated their research. In return, he often received advance copies of their articles, to which he appended comments.

Ray Baker's railroad investigation for *McClure's* exemplifies how the process worked. After Roosevelt learned of Baker's research, Goodwin tells us, he invited the reporter to join him for a "family lunch" and private conversation. Baker in turn "shared with the president a detailed outline of his planned series," arguing that "railroads were public highways that must be accessible to all on

fair and equal terms." Roosevelt confided that his biggest legislative hurdle in securing such legislation was the Senate, and advised the reporter "to be fair."

He gave Baker a government desk and stenographer, as well as easy access to documents, while embarking on his own campaign for railroad regulation. "Mindful" of a presidential request, Baker submitted a pre-publication draft of his first article in "The Railroads on Trial" series to the president. "I haven't a criticism to suggest," the president wrote back, adding that the story had "given me two or three thoughts for my own message."

Roosevelt reciprocated by sending Baker a partial draft of a railroad speech for comment. Baker offered legislative advice, spurring a heated correspondence. In the end, the president adopted some of Baker's suggestions, and the reporter's series "heightened public demand for regulation." A win-win, one might say, but in a manner that not even the most ideological journalist would sanction today.

Given all this cooperation, how is it that Roosevelt came to dismiss investigative journalists as "muckrakers?" According to Goodwin, the epithet was Roosevelt's response to an attack on the Senate in a magazine published by his enemy, William Randolph Hearst. Contrary to popular belief, she writes, the attack played little role in the subsequent breakup of *McClure's* and the consequent muting of American investigative journalism. Those events she attributes in large part to the erratic McClure, with his wild business schemes and extramarital dalliances.

Frustrated, *McClure's* best employees left and formed *The American Magazine*, which soon floundered. An age of journalistic hegemony was passing.

What are the most potent lessons of *The Bully Pulpit*? Not just that editors should treat their reporters with tender loving care, though that is a seductive prescription for journalistic success. Goodwin says that she hopes her tale somehow rouses readers to "demand the actions necessary to bring our country closer to its ancient ideals," a vague wish that brands her as the gentlest and most allusive of muckrakers. **CJR**

JULIA M. KLEIN is a *CJR* contributing editor.

Parking lot floods when man bursts

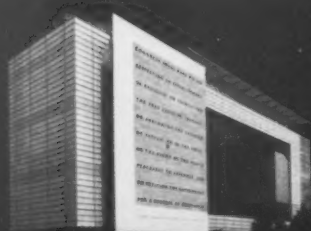
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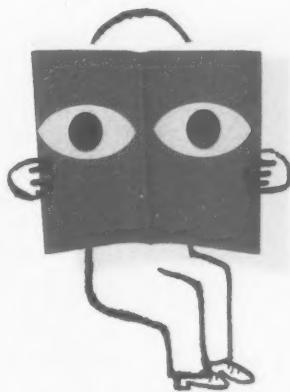
BY JAMES BOYLAN

The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility

By Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj
Oxford University Press
288 pages, \$34.95

THE TERM "OUTRAGE INDUSTRY" is hardly new. It has been bobbing around the English-speaking world for more than a hundred years, most often as a sarcastic epithet, somewhat in the same spirit as "the usual suspects." For example, a 1994 article in *New York* magazine was titled "Rudy [Giuliani] and the Outrage Industry," referring to the array of critics who automatically sprang forth to criticize the new mayor's every move. More recently, Bert Brandenburg, a writer on legal issues, stated that "2005 marked the national coming of age for an outrage industry that stokes anger over controversial decisions"—in this instance, the anger aroused at the courts over the Terri Schiavo right-to-die case.

Now Jeffrey M. Berry and Sarah Sobieraj, a political scientist and a sociologist based at Tufts University, have given what was once a mere figure of speech new form and substance. They hypothesize an actual outrage industry, an apparatus that distributes record amounts of outrage and fattens as it makes its biggest practitioners wealthy. The big-time list (as of 2010) is topped, in estimated annual income, by Rush Limbaugh (\$59 million), Glenn Beck (\$33 million), Sean Hannity (\$22 million), and Bill O'Reilly (\$20 million). They were far ahead of the liberal outrage artists at MSNBC, who



earned only in the single-digit millions. Moreover, the media chains and networks that disseminate these commentators have also prospered because advertisers are drawn to the big audiences seeking to gorge themselves on outrage.

The techniques of outrage compiled by Berry and Sobieraj are familiar: A content analysis concludes that both left and right employ, first, mockery and sarcasm, then, insults and name calling. The right, however, far outdoes the left in another technique, misrepresentation (lying). My favorite single example in the book of the apparent lunacy that outragers can attain is that of Glenn Beck on camera gutting a fish he had dubbed "Larry" to illustrate the treatment he favored for the contemptible mainstream press; he finally poked out the eyes of the (presumably dead) fish.

The underlying premise is that outrage techniques are more widespread and more dangerous than ever before, not only because they have assumed the heft of a major industry but because they

The so-called outrage industry isn't new, it's just more lucrative, more widespread, and more partisan than ever.

continue to spread. Hundreds of blogs have adapted outrage to their own purposes. The authors suggest, too, that the outragers aided

in the birth of the frequently outrageous Tea Party, and that members of Congress make themselves famous, or notorious, by adopting the techniques of the outrage media.

At the same time, former counterbalances have been weakened: Many of the old institutions of impartial news have faded or collapsed; and such restraints as the government placed on use of the broadcast media largely vanished by the 1990s. At the end, Berry and Sobieraj attempt to provide a few glimpses of hope—that advertisers might back off, that other voices will appear in other rooms, that outrage may reach a saturation point.

Perhaps. While *The Outrage Industry* offers a thorough survey of recent and present developments, it does little to convey the historical depth of the phenomenon. Although the authors present liberal and right-wing outrage as roughly equivalent in technique if not in size, in fact their foundations are profoundly different. The historian Richard Hofstadter, who died too young in

1970, foresaw the persistence of right-wing outrage in his 1965 book, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. He saw in what he called the "pseudo-conservative" movement, which had pushed forward Barry Goldwater's failed run for president, the appearance of an ostensibly patriotic faction that was, paradoxically, deeply unhappy and angry with America and the American system.

Hofstadter understood that elements of this movement would survive: "In a populist culture like ours ... in which it is possible to exploit the wildest currents of public sentiment for private purposes, it is at least conceivable that a highly organized, vocal, active, and well-financed minority could create a political climate in which the rational pursuit of our well-being and safety would become impossible."

Not impossible yet, but the irrational clearly dominates the right wing of the outrage industry. It has not won power, but certainly it has made the rational pursuit of national well-being more difficult. **CJR**

JAMES BOYLAN is the founding editor of the Columbia Journalism Review and professor emeritus of journalism and history at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst.



EXIT INTERVIEW

A news guy meets a deadline

WILLIAM DEAN SINGLETON STEPPED DOWN AS CHAIRMAN OF MEDIANEWS Group in December after decades at the helm of America's second-largest newspaper empire, which he founded in 1983 with the late Richard B. Scudder. He's staying on as non-executive chairman of The Denver Post. Singleton, 62, has been a polarizing figure in the industry. He first made a name for himself by buying small, struggling newspapers and ruthlessly cutting costs to turn them around. He's had beer cans hurled at him by angry reporters, but he's also held esteemed positions at The Associated Press and the Newspaper Association of America. Singleton bought his first newspaper when he was 21. Forty-one years and dozens of newspapers later, he spoke with *CJR's* **Noah Hurowitz** to reflect on his reign and legacy.

You've received a lot of criticism over the years, particularly from inside newsrooms. Do you think your work has been misunderstood by your critics? I can't speak for my critics. We started with one newspaper in New Jersey and built it into the second-largest newspaper company in the country. We pioneered clustering and used consolidated plants and operations before others were doing that. So because we were the first to do it, I probably got more criticism than most, and, you know, today everybody's doing it. We bought a lot of newspapers that were losing money that would not have survived had we not put them together in clusters.

How do you respond to critics who say your cost-saving methods harmed the journalistic community? I don't believe that. Our company has won many journalistic awards for reporting. *The Denver Post* is the only paper other than *The New York Times* that has won Pulitzer Prizes four years in a row. Most people who are critical probably haven't read the newspapers.

'We were a business in order to have a newspaper, not a newspaper in order to have a business.'

In an interview with *CJR* in March 2003, you said "I'm not a money guy." What has been your driving motivation? Well, I'm a news guy. I started out a news guy and I'm still a news guy. My partner for all these years, who passed away last year, was a news guy. But we understood that you cannot be an artistic success if you're not a financial success. A newspaper must be a business, and we've always recognized that. But we were a business in order to have a newspaper, not a newspaper in order to have a business.

MediaNews Group has shown a tenacious loyalty to print media. What is the future of the print newspaper in the digital era? We are very loyal to our print newspapers. And our loyalty has everything to do with the fact that print still delivers 80 percent of our revenue. And when you're getting 80 percent of your revenue from print, then you damn well better be loyal to your print newspapers. Most of the investment going forward will be in digital products, because that's where the world is going to be. But it's imperative to continue to be loyal to print. That is our past, it's most of our present, but it's not our future.

What's next for you? My first love in life was newspapering, where I started when I was 15, and bought a lot of newspapers. And my second love is ranching, and I've bought a lot of ranches and I'm in the ranching business. And my third love in life is wine, and so maybe I'll buy a winery. I'm very happy with the last 40 years, and whatever critics say or don't say, I'm very proud of what we've done, but I'm looking forward to doing the next chapter with my grown children and my grandchildren and living a little more leisurely, and watching those who follow me successfully change the industry that I love. **CJR**

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